THE Christian Life.

PART II.

Wherein the
FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
OF
Christian Duty
Are assigned, explained, and proved.

VOLUME I.

BY
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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

AND

Right Reverend Father in God

HENRY

Lord Biſhop of *London*,

And one of his Majeſties moſt Honourable Privy Council, &c.

My Lord,

I *Here preſent to your Lordſhip the* firſt *Volume of a* ſecond *Part of that Treatiſe of* Chriſtian Life, *which I publiſhed ſome years ſince, and which under the Protection of your* Venerable *Name hath found good acceptance*

with the World; and to make an ingenuous confeſsion to your Lordſhip, my deſign in this ſecond *Dedication is not* purely *to render you the due Reſpects of a* Presbyter *to his* Dioceſan; *nor to tender thoſe* juſt *Acknowledgments I ow to your Lordſhip for the happineſs I have enjoy'd, with the reſt of your Clergy, under the* auſpicious *Influence of your* ſerene *and* watchful *Government; no nor yet to expreſs the* grateful *ſenſe I have, and ſhall always retain, of the* perſonal *Obligations you have laid upon me; no, my Lord, though* theſe *were all of them ſufficient Inducements, yet I confeſs that together*

with

with *these I had a certain* Politick *end in my eye. For I thank God I can truly say my* main *Design in composing this Treatise was to* benefit *the* World; *but reflecting upon the manifold* defects *it abounds with after all the* pains *I had bestowed upon it, I found that, to palliate its* internal *blemishes, it was but needful to grace it with some* external *Ornament, and could think of none so proper for my purpose as this of affixing your Lordships* Name *to it; a Name that carries with it power enough to recommend any thing to the World that is but* pious, *and* honest, *and* well-designed, *and all* that, *I am sure,* this

this *is, how* defective *ſoever it be in* other *reſpects; which together with the experience I have had of the great* candor *and* benignity *of your Lordſhips temper, gives me encouragement to hope that you will not only* accept *but* approve *it; and then I am ſure your Lordſhips* approbation *will give it* credit *and* authority *enough with the World to enable it to effect thoſe* good *and* honeſt *ends for which it was ſincerely* intended *by*

Your Lordſhips

Moſt humble,

Moſt obliged and

Faithful Servant

John Scott.

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

WHEN I wrote the Treatise of *Christian Life*, of which *this* and *another* Volume, now in the Press, is a *second* Part, I had no design of engaging any further in that Argument; but *now* I find by experience that *Writing* is like *Building*, wherein the undertaker, to supply some *defect*, or serve some *convenience* which at first he *foresaw* not, is usually forced to *exceed* his first *Model* and *proposal*, and many times to *double* the *charge* and *expence* of it. For after that Treatise began to be a little known in the World, I was advised from several hands that there

was one thing *wanting* in it, which is the common *defect* of moſt *practical* Treatiſes, and that was, an *Explication* and *Proof* of thoſe main *Principles* of Religion in which the *Obligation* of our Chriſtian Duty is *founded*, which they thought might be ſufficiently done within a very *narrow* compaſs, though herein I find that either *they* were very much *miſtaken*, or that I have very much *exceeded* the neceſſary limits of my Argument, which I am not *yet* convinced of, but *that* I muſt ſubmit to the judgment of the World. I confeſs the proſpect of doing it in that *narrow* compaſs *they* talk'd of was a great inducement with me to undertake it, and perhaps had I *foreſeen* at firſt what a *large* field of diſcourſe it would oblige me to traverſe, I ſhould never have *entered* on it, but when once I was *in*, I could not handſomly *retreat*.

AND

And indeed conſidering with what prodigious *rudeneſs* and *inſolence* the very *foundations* of Religion are ſtruck at in this *diſſolute* Age, he who would *now* treat of them to any purpoſe will find himſelf obliged not only to give a diſtinct and clear *explication* of them, but alſo to aſſert the *truth* of them with convincing *evidence*, and to *anſwer* and *expoſe* thoſe Atheiſtical *Cavils* that are levelled againſt them; which *later* would have been much leſs neceſſary in an Age of a more *ſerious* and *Religious* Genius. And upon this account I have been forced upon a much *larger* and more *laborious* proof of the ſeveral *Principles* of Religion than I firſt intended. Not that I have any great hope of reclaiming thoſe who are *profeſſed* Atheiſts to the acknowledgment of the *truth*; for when men are *ſeduced* by *luſt*, as I verily believe moſt Atheiſts are, there is little reaſon

to expect they will be *reduced* by *reaſon*. But that which I chiefly aimed at is to *confirm* and *eſtabliſh* thoſe that are wavering, and to *Antidote* all againſt this ſpreading contagion of *Irreligion* and *Atheiſm*, which in a fatal Chain draws after it not only the ruine of mens Souls *hereafter*, but alſo the utter ſubverſion of all Humane Society *here*; And it is *this* hath conſtrained me to enlarge this *Second* Part into *two* Volumes, which at firſt view I promiſed my ſelf to finiſh in *one*.

In this *firſt* Volume I have treated only of *thoſe* Principles which are common to *natural Religion* and *Chriſtianity* together; as an Introduction to which I have in the *firſt* Chapter *explained* aud *demonſtrated* the *natural* diſtinction of Humane Actions into *good* and *evil*, by ſome *eternal* Reaſons *for* or *againſt* them; and having ſhewn at large that God hath made this

this diſtinction ſufficiently *clear* and *evident* to all men to enable them to conduct themſelves to their own *happineſs*, and that thoſe actions of men which fall under this *natural* diſtinction are the principal ſubject matter of the *commands* and *prohibitions* of Religion, I proceed in the *ſecond* Chapter briefly to explain the nature of Religion in *General*, and of *natural* and *Chriſtian* Religion in *particular*; from the nature of *both* which I have deduced thoſe *fundamental* Principles from whence the *Obligations* of Religion are *derived*; the five firſt of which being common to *natural Religion* with *Chriſtianity* I have handled in this firſt Volume in ſo many diſtinct Chapters.

And then as for the *laſt*, *viz.* the acknowledgment of *Jeſus Chriſt* our *Mediator*, which contains under it all thoſe Religious Principles that are *peculiar* to *Chriſtianity*, though I have

ende: voured to treat of it with all the *brevity* that is conſiſtent with a *clear* and *ſatisfactory* account of the whole Argument, yet it is run out into a *ſecond* Volume, which is now in the Preſs, and, I hope, within a few Weeks will be ready to follow *this*. And perhaps when the Reader conſiders the *copiouſneſs* of the Argument it handles, he will rather blame me for being too *brief* than too *tedious*; for in treating of thoſe Doctrines which have been handled *at large* in *other* Engliſh Treatiſes of the Chriſtian Faith, and eſpecially in that *incomparable* one of our moſt learned Biſhop of *Cheſter* on the *Creed* (a Book which next to the *Bible* I thankfully acknowledg my ſelf more beholden to for my inſtruction in the Doctrines of Religion than to any *one* I ever read) I have contracted my ſelf into as *narrow* a compaſs as the barely

neceſſary

neceſſary explication of them would permit me; but where that *renowned* Pen hath inſiſted more *Curſorily* (as for inſtance on the particular Offices of our bleſſed *Mediator*) I have moſt *enlarged* my ſelf, though even *there* I have for brevity ſake *pretermitted* ſome things I intended leſs *immediate* and *neceſſary* appertaining to the Argument.

UPON the whole I can truly ſay, that to the beſt of my underſtanding, I have herein delivered nothing but what is agreeable to the Doctrine of the *Primitive Church*, which as the moſt *faithful* Comment on the holy Writings of our Saviour and his Apoſtles I have all along *carefully* conſulted in *doubtful* and *difficult* caſes; and this is the reaſon why it hath ſtuck ſo long in hand, the pains I have taken in *conſulting* the *ancient* Monuments of Chriſtianity about it being, as I may truly ſay, at leaſt

double to that of *compoſing* it; and in following the *Primitive* Doctrine, I have followed the Doctrine of the *Church of England*, which in its *Faith*, *Government*, and *Diſcipline*, I believe in my conſcience, is the *moſt* Primitive Church in the World.

As for the *Method* I have choſen, which is to deduce all the Doctrines of Chriſtianity from one *general* Head, *viz.* the Doctrine of the *Mediator*, it is the moſt *convenient* I could think of for *my* purpoſe, which was to repreſent at once to the Readers view *all* the parts of our holy Religion in their natural connexion *with* and dependence *on* one another, that ſo he might be the better able to judge of the *beautiful* contexture and *admirable* contrivance of the whole, and that by ſeeing how *regularly* all the parts of it proceed out of *one* common *Principle*, and *conſpire* in *one* common *end*, he may be the

the better ſatisfied that Chriſtianity is ſo far from being a heap of *incoherencies*, as ſome have *injuriouſly* repreſented it, that conſidering it merely as an *Hypotheſis*, abſtracted from all that *external* evidence that accompanies it, the very *Art* and *contrivance* of it, the *proportion*, *ſymetry*, and *correſpondence* of its parts, their *ſubſerviency* to each other, and the *concurrence* and *tendency* of them all together to the common *ends* of Religion, are ſuch as do apparently exceed all *humane* Invention, and argue it to be the product of a *divine* mind. For as he who would form a true *Idea* of the *beauty* of a *Picture*, muſt not contemplate the parts of it *ſeparately*, but ſurvey them all *together*, and conſider them in their *proportions* and *correſpondencies* with each other, ſo he who would frame a right Notion of Religion muſt not look upon it as it lies *ſcattered* and *divided* into *ſingle* parts and propoſitions,

but

but conſider them in *contexture*, and as they are connected all together into one *body* or *hypotheſis*. For it is in their apt *Junctures*, their mutual *dependencies* and admirable *coherencies* with one another that the *beauty* and *harmony* of the whole conſiſts. And therefore to do *right* to Chriſtianity, and enable the Reader to contemplate it with the greateſt *advantage*, I have endeavoured to repreſent to him the whole in a *view*, and to give him a proſpect of *all* the parts of it *together*, in an harmonious *union* and *connexion* with each other. For I verily believe that the *mean* opinion which ſome witty men have entertained of Chriſtianity, proceeds in a great meaſure from their *broken* and *imperfect* apprehenſions of it; they underſtand it *piecemeal*, and take it aſunder into *ſingle* propoſitions, which they conſider *ſeparately* and *apart* by themſelves, without ever putting them together into

into one *regular* Syſtem, and preſenting them to their thoughts in that *orderly* connexion wherein the holy *Oracles* have delivered them to us. For I can ſcarce imagine how any man of ſenſe ſhould contemplate Chriſtianity *all together*, and *throughly* conſider the *harmonious* coherence of all its *parts*, and the *wonderful* contrivance of the *whole*, without being captivated with the *beauty* and *elegancy* of it.

And now I have nothing further to add concerning this Treatiſe but only to intreat the Reader not to be too *ſevere* in the peruſal of it. For though as for the *Doctrine* of it, I ſee no reaſon at all to *Apologize* for it, becauſe I am fully perſuaded of the *truth* of it, yet being forced, as I was, to compoſe it by *ſnatches*, and in the more *quiet* intervals of a *buſie* and *uneaſie* life, I very much ſuſpect the *exactneſs* both of the *Stile* and *Method* of it; and therefore all the favour I deſire

deſire is this, that where I have *improperly* or *obſcurely* expreſs'd my ſelf I may be conſtrued in the moſt *favourable* ſenſe, and that wherever I may ſeem to be *confuſed* or *immethodical* it may be attributed to thoſe frequent *interruptions* which the *diſorders* of my *body* have given to my *thoughts*. And theſe are requeſts ſo very *juſt* and *reaſonable*, that I am confident none will be ſo *peeviſh* as to deny me, but they who read Books only to *carp* and *find fault*, and without any deſign to *Edifie* their own underſtandings. But I hope the Reader will conſider that the Argument here treated of is of too *great* moment to him to be ſo wretchedly *trifled* with, and that therefore he will not be either ſo *diſingenuous* to *me*, or *uncharitable* to *himſelf*, as to peruſe with ſuch a *ſpiteful* deſign that which I *ſincerely* intended for his good, and which he, I am ſure, if he pleaſes, may be the *better* for *for ever*.

THE

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OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PART II.

CHAP. I.

Concerning the Being, and Nature of Moral *Goodneſs.*

ALL Humane Actions are either Neceſſary, or Sinfull, or Indifferent. The *Neceſſary* are ſuch as are *commanded*, the *Sinful* ſuch as are *forbidden* by God, the *Indifferent* ſuch as are neither commanded nor forbidden, but left entirely free to our Choice and Diſcretion. Again, the neceſſary and the ſinful actions are either ſuch as are neceſſary and ſinfull *in themſelves*, and are commanded and forbidden upon the account of ſome Good and Evil that is *inſeparable* to their Natures; or ſuch as are *indifferent* in their own Natures, as to any good or evil *inherent* in them, but are made neceſſary or ſinful by

ſome *poſitive* Command or Prohibition ſuperinduced upon them. Of the firſt ſort are thoſe which we call *Moral* Actions; as being the ſubject matter of the Moral Law, which commands, and forbids nothing but what is *eſſentially* and *immutably* good and evil: and whilſt there was no other Law but this, every Action which did not oblige by ſome *eternal* Reaſon, or which is the ſame, by ſome *inſeparable* good or evil, was left *free* and *indifferent*. But in proceſs of time God ſuperadded to this *Moral* Law a great many *Poſitive* ones, whereby he obliged men to do, and forbear ſundry of thoſe *indifferent* things, which were left to their liberty by the Law of *Nature*. For ſuch we call the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Moſaick Law*; all which were *indifferent* before they were *impoſed*, and as ſoon as ever the *Impoſition* was taken off from them, did immediately return to their Primitive *Indifferency*; ſo that by the abolition of their *Ceremonial* Law, the *Jews* were reſtored to all the Liberties of the *Moral*; excepting only the matter of the two *Sacraments*, and of maintaining a *viſible Communion* with the Church, which are determined by poſitive Laws of Chriſtianity. And of this later ſort of neceſſary and ſinful Actions, are, not only all thoſe

those indifferent ones which God himself has commanded and forbidden *immediately*, but also all those which he commands and forbids by his *Vice-roys* and *Representatives*, in this World. For whatsoever he hath not commanded or forbidden by *his own immediate* Dictate and Authority, he hath Authorized his Vicegerents to command or forbid, as *they* shall judge it most expedient for the Publick. So that when they command what God hath not forbidden, or forbid what he hath not commanded, *their will* is *God's*, who commands us by their Mouths and stamps their Injunctions with his own Authority.

And of this distinction between actions that are *morally* and *positively* Necessary, the Scripture frequently takes notice, and particularly, *Mich.* vi. 6. 7, 8. *Wherewithall shall I come before the Lord and bow my self before the high God? shall I come before him with Burnt-Offerings, with Calves of a year old*, &c. No, these are not the things that will render me acceptable in his eyes; and procure me a welcome Admission into his Presence; and yet it is certain that these things were then *required* and *commanded*, and therefore were *positively* necessary; but that they were not necessary *in themselves* upon the account of any *in-*

trinſick Goodneſs that was in them, is evident from what follows, *He hath ſhewed thee O man what is good*; as much as if he ſhould have ſaid, the things above named are in their *own* nature indifferent, having neither good nor evil in themſelves; and are *made* neceſſary meerly by *poſitive* Command, upon which account they are inſufficient to recommend you to God: but there are other things that carry an *intrinſick* Beauty and Goodneſs in their Nature by which they ſtrictly oblige you to imbrace and practiſe them, and do thereupon recommend you by their own *native* Charms, to the Love and Favour of God; and what theſe good things are he hath ſufficiently ſhewn or diſcovered to you, *viz. To do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God*, which are the main and principal Duties that he *requires of you*. Which plainly implies that there are ſome Actions which are *morally*, that is, in their own Natures, *eternally* good, and therefore eternally neceſſary, and ſome that are neceſſary only becauſe for ſome *preſent* Reaſon God Wills and Commands them. For no account can be given why he ſhould be more pleaſed with *Juſtice* and *Mercy* and *Humility*, than with *Sacrifice*, unleſs we ſuppoſe the former to be

be good, and therefore neceſſary upon *immutable* Reaſons, and upon that account to be immutably pleaſing to him; and the latter to be neceſſary only upon *mutable* reaſons which therefore were to loſe their Neceſſity as ſoon as thoſe reaſons did alter or ceaſe. For had Sacrifices been good in their *own* Natures, their goodneſs had been as *unalterable* as their Nature; whereas, on the contrary we find, that whereas their *Nature* neither is nor can be altered, yet their *Goodneſs* or *Neceſſity* is. For as before God adopted them into the Rubrick of Religion by his own poſitive Inſtitution they were *indifferent* things; ſo after this Inſtitution was repealed by a contrary Command, they became *unlawful*. So that it is *now* as neceſſary that we ſhould *not* Offer them in the Worſhip of God, as it was *before* that we *ſhould*. And the ſame may be ſaid of all the other Rites of the *Moſaick* Law: which being in their own Nature Indifferent, could no otherewiſe be converted either into Neceſſary or Sinful, but by God's expreſs Command or Prohibition. Whereas *Juſtice* and *Mercy*, &c. are good in themſelves *abſtractly* conſidered from all Will and Command; and are not good meerly becauſe they are *Commanded*, but are commanded becauſe they are *good*; be-

cauſe they carry with them ſuch *unalterable* Reaſons as do in themſelves render the practice of them eternally neceſſary. For tho there be very good reaſon why men ſhould not offer material Sacrifices, notwithſtanding they were once injoyned; yet it can *never* be reaſonable for them to be *unjuſt* or *cruel* or *proud*, becauſe the contrary vertues carry ſuch *fixed* and *immutable* Reaſons with them as will bind and oblige us to eternity; inſomuch that tho we had a Diſpenſation to be proud under the Broad-Seal of Heaven, yet 'twould ſtill be very *abſurd* and *unreaſonable* to be ſo. And as things that are only *poſitively* neceſſary or ſinful, derive all their neceſſity and ſinfulneſs from God's *direct* or *expreſs* Command and Prohibition; ſo they cannot be commanded or forbidden by *Conſequence*. For if the Matter of them be *antecedently* Lawful or Indifferent, it muſt neceſſarily remain ſo till it is *directly* commanded or forbidden; there being no other Reaſon to bound and limit it, but only the Will of the Law-giver in whoſe diſpoſal it is: and therefore till he *directly* ſignifies his Will either for or againſt it, it muſt remain as it is, i. e. *Free* and *Indifferent*. But you will ſay, Suppoſe God hath commanded *ſuch* an indifferent thing for *ſuch* a Reaſon,

doth

doth it not thence follow that he thereby commands every *other* indifferent thing that hath the ſame reaſon for it? I anſwer, No; for if the Reaſon why he commands it be *neceſſary* and *eternal*, it is not a thing *indifferent*, but *morally* neceſſary, and ſo is every thing elſe that hath the *ſame* Reaſon for it; and conſequently the reaſon of the Law, tho it be applyed but to one thing, extends to every thing of the ſame Nature; becauſe in all moral Caſes the *Reaſon* of the Law is the *Law*. But if the thing commanded be in it ſelf *indifferent*, the Reaſon why it is commanded cannot be *neceſſary*; and therefore tho there be the ſame *Reaſon* why another thing of the ſame Nature ſhould be commanded, yet it doth not neceſſarily oblige unleſs it be commanded *actually*; becauſe in ſuch Caſes it is not the *Reaſon* but the *Authority* of the Law that obliges: and therefore where there is only the Reaſon and not the Law, it lays no obligation on the Conſcience.

From the whole therefore it is evident what is the difference between things that are *poſitively* and *morally* Neceſſary and Sinful; which I thought very neceſſary to explain at large for the giving a fuller light to the enſuing Diſcourſe; in which I ſhall endeavor to ſhew,

First, THAT there is such an *intrinsick* Goodness in some *Humane* Actions as renders them for ever *necessary* and *obliging* to us.

Secondly, THAT God hath sufficiently discovered to us what those Humane Actions are which carry with them this *perpetual obligation*.

Thirdly, THAT these Actions which carry with them this perpetual obligation are the *main* and *principal* parts of Religion.

SECT. I.

That there is such an Intrinsick *Good in some Humane Actions as render them for ever* Necessary *and* obliging *to us.*

GOOD is twofold, *Absolute*, or *Respective*, or the Good of the *End* and the Good of the *Means*. The good of the End is that which is the Perfection and Happiness of any Being; the good of the Means is that which tends and conduces thereunto. As for Instance, the *absolute* Good of a Brute Animal consists in the

the Perfection and Satisfaction of its Senſe, or in having perfect Feeling and Senſation of ſuch things as are moſt grateful to its Appetite and Senſes. Its *reſpective* Good is the Means by which its Senſes are perfected or rendred lively and vigorous, and by which it's provided for with ſuch things as are grateful and pleaſing to them. For there being in every *animate* nature a Principle whereby it's neceſſarily inclined to promote its own Preſervation and Well-being, that which hath in it a fitneſs to promote this End is called *Good*, as on the contrary that which is apt to hinder it *Evil*. Now Man being not only a *ſenſitive* but a *rational* Creature, hath a twofold Good belonging to his Nature, the firſt Senſitive which is the ſame with that of brute Animals, conſiſting in the Perfection and Satisfaction of his bodily Senſes and Appetites, and in thoſe means which conduce thereunto; and this for diſtinction ſake is called his *Natural* Good: the ſecond Rational, which conſiſts in the Perfection and Satisfaction of his Rational Faculties, and in thoſe means which tend thereunto; and this is ſtiled his *Moral Good*, though in reality 'tis as much *Natural* as the former. For Man being naturally as well Rational as Senſitive, that which promotes his Rational

tional Perfection and Happineſs, is no leſs *naturally* good for him than that which promotes his Senſitive: Nay his Rational Nature being the much more *noble* and *excellent* part of him, that which naturally promotes the Perfection and Happineſs of it, is in it ſelf a much *greater* good to his Nature and ought to be preferred by him before any of thoſe Natural goods, which conduce only to the happineſs of his ſenſitive Nature; and he who indulges his *ſenſitive* Part in any Pleaſure which his Rational diſallows, doth thereby create a torment to himſelf, and raiſe a Devil in his own mind. For tho Reaſon and Religion doth allow that the Senſitive nature ſhould be gratified in all its natural Appetites and Deſires, yet neither allow that it ſhould be pampered and indulged in any ſuch Excеſſes as are prejudicial either to it ſelf or to that Rational Nature whereunto it is joyned; and he who indulges his Senſe in any ſuch Exceſſes, renders himſelf obnoxious to his own Reaſon, and to gratifie the *Brute* in him diſpleaſes the *Man*, and ſets his two Natures at variance. So that there is nothing can be *naturally* good for us, that is any way inconſiſtent with what is *morally* ſo, *i.e.* with what conduces to the Perfection and Happineſs of our rational Nature; and tho

tho this Natural and Moral Good are no way inconſiſtent with one another, yet it is the Moral that is the Supreme Good of a Man, becauſe it is the good of his moſt excellent Nature. Having thus premiſed what I mean by *Good* in general, and particularly by *Moral* Good, I proceed to ſhew that in ſome Humane actions there is ſuch an *intrinſick moral* Good as renders 'em for ever obliging to us. And this I ſhall endeavour in theſe following Propoſitions.

Firſt, THAT the Happineſs of Humane Nature is founded in its *Perfection*.

Secondly, THAT the Perfection of Humane Nature conſiſts in acting ſuitably to the moſt *perfect Reaſon*.

Thirdly, THAT the moſt perfect Reaſon is that wherein all reaſonable Beings do *conſent* and *agree*.

Fourthly, THAT there are certain Rules of Moral Good, wherein all Reaſonable Beings are *agreed*.

Fifthly, THAT to act ſuitably to thoſe Rules hath been always found by univerſal experience *conducible* to the Happineſs of Humane Nature, and the contrary *miſchievous* thereunto.

I. THAT the Happineſs of Humane Nature is founded in its *Perfection*. For the

the Perfection of Beings consists in their being *compleatly* disposed and adapted for the End whereunto they are designed. Now the End of all Beings that have Life and Sense, is that sort of Happiness that is suitable to their Natures; for 'tis thither that they all of them naturally tend, and therein that their Faculties do all concenter. When therefore their Faculties or Powers of Action are compleatly disposed to enjoy the proper Happiness of their Natures, then are they perfect in their Kind. Thus for instance, the End of Brutes which have only Bodily Sense, is *Sensitive* and *corporeal* Happiness; and thererefore then is the Brute Creature perfect in its kind, when it hath not only all the Parts and Senses that are necessary to procure and enjoy its Happiness, but hath them also *perfectly* fitted, tempered, and qualified to pursue and relish it. And supposing that all the pleasure or happiness of a Beast consisted in the Taste and Smell of its Pasture, it could never be compleatly happy so long as the Organs of its Smell or Taste were imperfect. So that the perfection of every Sensible Nature consists in being perfely disposed to enjoy its Natural Happiness. And accordingly herein consists the Perfection of Humane Nature, in being perfectly

ctly fitted and diſpoſed to enjoy and reliſh Humane Happineſs. For this being its proper End, it is impoſſible it ſhould ever be perfect in its Kind till 'tis compleatly contempered and adapted thereunto. So that our Happineſs muſt neceſſarily be founded in our *Perfection*, which is nothing elſe but the perfect Diſpoſition of our Natures to reliſh and enjoy thoſe Goods wherein the Happineſs of our Nature conſiſts; and till our Nature is perfectly diſpoſed to enjoy them, all the good things of Heaven and Earth will be inſufficient to render us perfectly happy.

II. THAT the Perfection of Humane Nature conſiſts in acting ſutably to the moſt *Perfect Reaſon*. For Reaſon being the top and Crown of Humane Nature, hath a natural Right to *Command* and *Diſpoſe* of its Motions; to be the Eye of its Will, and the Guide of its Affections, and the *Law* of all its Powers of Action. And indeed, for what other uſe ſerves the Reaſon of a Man, but to preſcribe Rules to his unreaſonable Affections, to *light* and *direct* them to their proper Objects, and as they are moving towards them to *moderate* their Exceſſes and to *quicken* their Defects and to lead them on to true Happineſs in an even Courſe through all the wild Mazes of

of popular Miſtakes? And unleſs it be thus imployed, the man is Reaſonable *in vain*, and his light like a Candle incloſed in a Dark-Lanthorn burns out in waſt and ſpends it ſelf in an uſeleſs and unprofitable blaze. And whilſt to pleaſe our Appetites and Paſſions we run counter to the advice of our Reaſon, we forſake the rule of our Natures and act like Beaſts and not like Men; in which courſe of Action if we perſiſt, we muſt neceſſarily *degenerate* from our ſelves, and *ſink* by degrees into the moſt ſordid Brutality. For when once our Appetites have gotten the Command of our Reaſon, and not only *dethroned* but *inſlaved* it, the very Order of our Nature is *tranſpoſed* and we are become our own *Reverſe* and *Antipodes*. If therefore we would arrive at our own Perfection it muſt be by following our Reaſon, and ſubmitting all our Affections and Appetites to its Government. For what elſe can be the Perfection of a Rational Nature, but to be perfectly Rational; and what is it to be perfectly Rational, but to have our Minds throughly *inſtructed* with the Principles of Right Reaſon, and our Will and Affections intirely *regulated* by them? For herein conſiſts the Supream Perfection not only of Men, but of Angels, yea and of God Himſelf,

Himſelf, the Crown and Glory of whoſe Nature it is, that he always *knows*, and *chuſes* and *acts* what is *fitteſt* and *beſt* and *moſt reaſonable*. And when once our Underſtanding is ſo far *inlightned* as that it always *dictates* right Reaſon to us; and our Will and Affections are ſo far *ſubdued* as that they always freely and chearfully *comply* with it, we have arrived to the very top of our Nature, and are Commenced perfect Men in Chriſt Jeſus.

III. THAT the moſt perfect Reaſon is that wherein all Reaſonable Beings do *conſent* and *agree*. For if there be any ſuch matter as *True* and *Falſe*, *Reaſonable*, and *Unreaſonable* in the Nature of things, and if there be any ſuch thing as *Underſtanding* among Beings, whereby they are capable of diſtinguiſhing between the *one* and the *other*; either that muſt be True and Reaſonable which *all* Underſtandings do *conſent* and *agree* in, or all the Underſtandings that are in the World muſt be under a fatal *Cheat* and *Deluſion*. Which later being ſuppoſed inevitably deſtroys all *Knowledge* and *Certainty*, and lays a foundation for the wildeſt *Scepticiſm*. For ſuppoſing all Underſtandings to be *deceived* and *impoſed* on, it is impoſſible for us to be *certain* of any thing, and for all we know, a Part may

may be bigger than the Whole, two and two may make twenty, and both parts of a Contradiction may be true. Nay we can never be certain whether we are not Dreaming when we think we are Awake, and whether we are not Awake when we think we are Dreaming. Either therefore we muſt *renounce* all Certainty whatſoever, and *fluctuate* in eternal Scepticiſm, or *allow* that to be True and Reaſonable which all Underſtandings do unanimouſly vote ſo.

IV. THAT there are certain Rules of Moral Goodneſs concerning the immutable Reaſon whereof all Underſtandings are *agreed*. For ſuch are all thoſe which preſcribe the Dueneſs of *Worſhip* and *Veneration* to God, of *Obedience* and *Loyalty* to our Parents and Superiours, of *Temperance* and *Fortitude* to our ſelves, and of *Juſtice* and *Charity* to one another; to the Goodneſs and Reaſonableneſs of which Rules, all Underſtandings do as unanimouſly *conſent*, as to the truth of any Propoſition in the Mathematicks. Now of all the orders of Reaſonable Beings, that which we moſt *converſe* with and with whoſe Conſent and Agreement in any matters we are beſt *acquainted*, is that of *Men*; and therefore if among Men we can diſcover ſuch an Univerſal

verſal *Agreement* concerning the Goodneſs of theſe Rules as will warrant us to conclude all other Rational Beings to be *conſenting* with them, this will be a ſufficient Demonſtration of the Truth of the Propoſition. Theſe two things therefore I ſhall endeavour to make out, 1. That the Reaſon of Men is *Univerſally* conſenting in this matter, *viz.* That there is an *immutable* Goodneſs in theſe Rules of Morality. 2. That this Univerſal Conſent of *Mens* Reaſon in this matter is a ſufficient Demonſtration that all *other* reaſonable Beings are conſenting with them.

Firſt, THEREFORE there is nothing more evident than that *Men* are Univerſally agreed in this matter, that to *Worſhip* God, to *Honour* their Parents and Superiours, to be *temperate* in their Paſſions and Appetites, and *juſt* and *charitable* towards one another, are things in their own nature *immutably* good; that this is not an Opinion peculiar to ſuch an *Age*, or to ſuch a *Nation*, or to ſuch a *Sect* of Religion, but the *Univerſal* Judgment of all Mankind of whatſoever Age, Nation, or Religion. For 'tis upon this judgment that all that *Conſcience* is founded which approves of or condemns mens actions; which Conſcience is nothing elſe but a Senſe or Feel-

ing of Moral Good and Evil; and is every whit as natural to Mens minds, as the Senſe of pleaſant or painful touches to their Bodies. Since therefore general *Effects* muſt ſpring from general *Cauſes*, it neceſſarily follows that that *Pain* and *Pleaſure* which Mens minds generally feel upon the Commiſſion of *bad* and *good* Actions, muſt be reſolved into ſome general Cauſe; and what elſe can that be, but the general *Conſent* of their Reaſon concerning the immutable Evil of the *one* and Good of the *other*? I know 'tis pretended by ſome of our Modern Navigators that there are a ſort of People in the World who have not the leaſt ſenſe of Good and Evil, and do own neither *God* nor *Religion* nor *Morality*. But conſidering the ſhort Converſe and imperfect Intercourſe which theſe our new Diſcoverers have had with thoſe Barbarous Countries, it is fairly ſuppoſeable that the Inhabitants may have Notions both *Religious* and *Moral*, of which Strangers who underſtand not their Language and Cuſtoms, and Manners, can make little or no Diſcovery. But ſuppoſe that what they report were *true*; yet by their own confeſſion theſe wretched *Barbarians* are in all other things ſo extreamly Brutiſh, that they diſcover no other

other token of their Humanity but their Shape. For they live altogether *regardleſs* of themſelves; of the *Conveniences* of their Lives, and of the *Dignity* of their Natures; without making any *Reflections* on their own minds, or any *Obſervations* from their own experience. Since therefore all Knowledge is acquired by Attention, it is not at all impoſſible for Creatures ſo utterly *ſupine* and *negligent* to be ignorant of the moſt common Notions. But for any man to queſtion the truth of this *general* Rule, becauſe there are a few *Exceptions* from it, is every whit as abſurd as if he ſhould queſtion whether Men are generally *two-legg'd* Animals, becauſe there have been ſome Monſters with *three*. And what if among men there are ſome Monſters in reſpect of their *Minds*, as well as others in reſpect of their *Bodies*? This is no more a prejudice to the ſtanding Laws of *Humane* Nature, than Prodigies are to the Regularity of the conſtant courſe of *Univerſal* Nature. *Specimen naturæ cujuſlibet*, ſaith *Tully*, *à natura optima ſumendum eſt*, i. e. *The true ſample of every Nature is to be taken from the beſt Natures of the kind.* Since therefore the men of all Nations and Ages and Religions who have in any meaſure attended to the Nature of

things, and made but any tolerable uſe of their Reaſons, are, and always have been *univerſally* agreed that there is an immutable Good in Vertue, and Evil in Vice; it is no Argument at all that this is not the *general Senſe* of Mankind, ſuppoſing it *true* which is very *queſtionable*, that there are ſome *few* ſuch inhumane Barbarians in the World as make no diſtinction at all between 'em. But then

Secondly, THIS Univerſal Conſent of *Mens* Reaſon in this matter, is a ſufficient Demonſtration that all *other* Reaſonable Beings are conſenting with them. For it ſhews that God himſelf is of this mind; and if *He* be, we may be ſure that all *other* Reaſonable Beings are. For if we believe that God made us, we muſt believe that he made us for ſome *End*; and if he made us for any End, he muſt eſteem thoſe Actions *good* which *promote* it, and thoſe *evil* which *obſtruct* and *hinder* it. And what other End can an infinitely happy and bleſſed Being have in making other Beings; but only to do 'em good and according to their ſeveral Capacities to make them partakers of his own Happineſs? And if this be the end for which God made us, to be ſure thoſe Actions muſt be *good* in his eſteem that are *beneficial*, and thoſe *evil* that are *hurtful* and

and *miſchievous* to our Nature. And therefore ſince he hath implanted in us not only a natural *Deſire* of Happineſs; but alſo a rational *Faculty* to diſcern what Actions make for our Happineſs and what not, we may be ſure that whatſoever this Faculty doth *Univerſally* determine to be good or evil for us, *is* good or evil in the Judgment of *God*. 'Tis true when the Reaſon that is in *one* man judges contrary to the Reaſon that is in *another*, there muſt be a *Diſagreement* on one ſide or the other from the Reaſon and Judgment of *God*; but when *all* mens Reaſon is agreed that *this* is good and *that* evil, it is plain that this is is the Judgment of the Rational Faculty which *naturally* makes ſuch a *Diſtinction* of things. For there is no man that uſes his Reaſon can poſſibly think that *Truth* and *Falſhood*, *Juſtice* and *Injuſtice*, *Mercy* and *Cruelty* are equally *good* in themſelves; his Rational Faculty being ſo framed as that at the firſt glance and reflection, it naturally *diſtinguiſhes* 'em into *Good* and *Evil*. When therefore God hath created us with ſuch a *Faculty* as naturally makes ſuch a *Judgment* of Good and Evil, that *Judgment* muſt be Gods as well as the *Faculty* which made it. That therefore which is the *unanimous Judgment* of

all Men, muſt be the *Natural Language* of the Rational Faculty; and that which is the natural Language of the Rational Faculty muſt be the Language of the *God of Nature*. For he who created me with ſuch a Faculty as naturally judges *this* Good and *that* Evil, muſt either have the ſame Judgment *himſelf*, or create in me a Contradiction to his *own* Judgment; and that Judgment which he hath created in *me*, he muſt be ſuppoſed to create in *all other* Beings that are capable of Judging; otherwiſe he would be the author of *Contradictory* Judgments. For, ſhould one Rational Faculty naturally judge *this*, and another the *contrary*, they muſt neceſſarily be ſo framed as to *contradict* each other, and conſequently he who framed both muſt be the Author of the Contradiction. So that this *univerſal Conſent* of Men concerning the *Good* and *Evil* of Humane Actions is a plain Evidence that God and all other Rational Beings are *conſenting* with 'em.

V. AND Laſtly, that Mens acting *conformably* to theſe Rules of Moral Goodneſs, in which they are thus *univerſally conſenting*, hath by long and conſtant Experience been found moſt *conducive* to Mens Welfare and Happineſs. For the

Proof

Proof whereof I ſhall need urge no other Argument than this, that the great *Deſign* of all Humane Laws and Conſtitutions hath been to *ſecure* and *inforce* theſe Rules of *Morality*; which is a plain Argument that Men have always found by *Experience* that they are naturally good and productive of their Happineſs and Welfare. For how can it be thought that after men have had ſo many thouſand years *Trial* of Piety and Juſtice and Mercy and Temperance, they ſhould ſtill be ſo ſolicitous to *fence* and *guard* 'em with Laws, had they not found 'em highly *advantagious*, and their Contraries as *miſchievous* to Mankind. For do but ſuppoſe that the Contraries to all Vertue were for *Experiment-ſake* impoſed for ſome time upon Mankind, and it were made as Penal by the Laws of Nations ro be *Pious*, and *Juſt*, *Merciful*, and *Temperate* as it is now to be the contrary; is it imaginable that that which we now call *Vice* ſhould in proceſs of time acquire the ſame Univerſal *Reputation* that *Virtue* hath always had among men? Or at leaſt, is it probable that after ſome *thouſand* years Trial and Experience of *ſuch* a Law, Men ſhould ſtill be as much concerned to guard and inforce it, as they are and always have been to ſe-

cure the Laws of Piety and Virtue? No, it is moſt certain they would not. For the very injoyning of *Impiety*, *Injuſtice*, and *Cruelty* would be in effect to injoyn men to render themſelves moſt *wretched* and *miſerable*; to ſurrender up all the *Supports* of their Hope, the *Peace* of their Conſciences and the *Tranquillity* of their Minds; to live in everlaſting *Broils* and *Diſcords*, and turn *Robbers* and *Cut-throats* to one another, and utterly deprive themſelves of all the *Comforts* and *Securities* of Humane Society. So that there is no doubt but after a *few* Years Experience of the miſchievous Conſequents of ſuch a Law, the whole World would *groan* under it as an inſupportable Tyranny, and even the moſt *Vicious* would ſoon grow quite *weary* of it, and heartily wiſh that it were for ever *Repealed*, and the good old Laws of Piety and Virtue *reſtored* and *inforc'd* upon Mankind. And if ſo, it is plain that Virtue and Vice are diſtinguiſhed by their *Natures* into good and evil; and that the Obligations we lie under to *practiſe* the one, and *abſtain* from the other, are not founded in any *Arbitrary* Conſtitution, but in the *eſſential* Goodneſs and Malignity that inſeparably adheres to them.

AND

AND if we conſult the Experience of *particular* Men, we ſhall always find, that whereas *Impiety* and *Injuſtice*, *Fraud*, and *Malice* do naturally *torment* mens Minds with Anguiſh and Confuſion, *haunt* their Breaſts with fearful Thoughts and dire Expectations, *harraſs* their Souls with perpetual Malecontentedneſs, and *intricate* their whole Lives with everlaſting Shifts and Intrigues; *Piety* and *Juſtice*, *Truth* and *Benevolence* do as naturally *ſooth* and *raviſh* their Minds, fill 'em with *bleſſed* Hopes and *chearful* Reflections; *compoſe* their Paſſions, *ſtrengthen* and *invigorate* their Hearts, and render the whole Courſe of their Lives *plain* and *direct*, *even* and *eaſie*. And hereby Vertue doth ſenſibly recommend it ſelf to our Natures in all its Capacities, as being ſuted to the Satisfaction of all its reaſonable Deſires, and ſo by conſequence deſigned to make up the *compleateſt* and moſt *intire* Enjoyment. All which is as plain and obvious to the Reaſon of Mankind as any Matter of Fact that is before us. So that 'tis not only the *Reaſon*, but alſo the *Experience* of Mankind that univerſally *agrees* and *conſents* in this great Truth, that there is ſuch a Good in *Virtuous* and ſuch an Evil in *Vicious* Actions, as doth

eternally

eternally and *inſeparably* cleave to their Natures.

AND therefore ſince our Nature is to continue the ſame for ever; the ſame *Vertues* and *Vices* which are now the *Perfection* and *Depravation*, and conſequently the *Happineſs* and *Miſery* of it, will be ſo *for ever*. From whence it neceſſarily follows, that our eternal *Happineſs* and *Miſery* is founded in the Courſe of our own Actions. So that as in the Courſe of a *virtuous* Life we are growing up into a State of *fixed* and *everlaſting* Vertue, wherein we ſhall be everlaſtingly *Perfect* and *Happy*; ſo on the contrary, in a courſe of *vicious* Actions we are ſinking into a ſtate of *everlaſting* Viciouſneſs, wherein we ſhall be everlaſtingly *wretched* and *miſerable*. For ſince Virtue is *good* for and Vice *evil* to us in its own Nature, it neceſſarily follows that according as we remain *Virtuous* or *Vicious* for ever, our Condition muſt be *good* or *evil* for ever. And this being ſo, of what unſpeakable Conſequence are the Actions of Men, that thus draw after 'em a Chain of *Joys* or *Woes* as long as Eternity? And how careful ought we to be, to what courſe of Life we determine our ſelves, conſidering that our *eternal* Fate depends upon what we are *now* doing

doing; that every Moral Action we perform is a ſtep *Heaven* or *Hell wards*; that in every bad or good Choice we make, we are planting our *Tophet* or our *Paradiſe*; and that in the Conſequents of our preſent Actions we ſhall *rue* or *rejoyce* to eternal Ages? O would to God men would at laſt be ſo wiſe as to conſider theſe things before it be too late, and not live at Random, as they do, without any Regard to the certain and unavoidable Fate of their own Actions! For doubtleſs would they but throughly weigh the *Nature* and *Event* of things, and look before they leap into Action, they would ſee infinitely more *Charm* and *Terror* in that *Good* and *Evil* which inſeparably adheres to virtuous and vicious Actions, than in all the Temptations in the World. Wherefore in the name of God let us look about us, and for once reſolve to act like Beings that muſt for ever feel the *bad* or *good* effects of our own Doings. Which if we do, we ſhall not only live well and happily here, but to all Eternity experience the bleſſed Conſequents of it.

SECT. II.

SECT. II.

That God hath ſufficiently diſcovered *to us what thoſe Humane Actions are, which are* Morally *Good, and upon that account* perpetually obliging.

THE Truth of which will evidently appear by conſidering the Particulars, what it is that God hath done in order to the making this great *Diſcovery* to us; the moſt conſiderable of which are reducible to theſe ſix Heads,

Firſt, HE hath implanted in us a natural *Deſire* of Happineſs.

Secondly, HE hath given us Reaſon to *diſcern* what Actions they are that make for our Happineſs, and what not.

Thirdly, HE hath ſo contrived our Natures as that we are thruſt on by our own *Inſtincts* and *Paſſions*, to thoſe Actions which make for our Happineſs.

Fourthly, HE hath taken care to excite and oblige us to thoſe Actions by annexing natural *Rewards* to them and entailing natural *Puniſhments* on their Contraries.

Fifthly, TO ſtrengthen and inforce this Obligation, he hath frequently ſuperadded to theſe *natural* Rewards and Puniſhments *ſupernatural Bleſſings* and *Judgments*.

Sixthly,

Sixthly, THAT to enforce all this he hath made ſundry ſupernatural *Revelations* wherein he hath plainly told us what thoſe things are that carry with 'em this intrinſick Good and Neceſſity,

I. GOD hath taken care to diſcover to us what is Morally Good by implanting in us an atural *Deſire* of Happineſs; which is ſo inſeparable to Humane nature, that 'tis *impoſſible* for us to forbear deſiring what *is* good for us, or at leaſt what *appears* ſo. For tho through our own Ignorance and Inconſideration we many times miſtake *Evil* for *Good*, and *Miſery* for *Happineſs*, yet ſuch is the Frame of our Nature, that we cannot deſire Evil *as* Evil, or Miſery *as* Miſery; but whenſoever we imbrace a *real* Evil, 'tis either under the Notion of a *leſs* Evil, or of a *real* and *ſubſtantial* Good. Now by this unquenchable *Thirſt* and *Deſire* of Happineſs which God hath implanted in our Natures, we are continually *importuned* and *excited* to ſearch out and enquire by what Ways and Means we may arrive to be happy. So that as *Hunger* and *Thirſt* and the ſenſe of bodily *Pain* and *Pleaſure* forceth men upon the invention of *Trades* and civil *Occupations* to ſupply their Neceſſities and Conveniences: So this vehement Hunger and Thirſt after Happineſs, which God hath created in our Boſoms,

Boſoms, doth almoſt *neceſſitate* and *conſtrain* us to pry into the Nature of our Actions; that ſo we may diſcover what Trade and Courſe of life it is that tends moſt directly to our own Felicity. And by thus *importuning* us by our own *ſelf-love* to enquire into the Nature of our Actions and into their natural tendencies to our Weal or Woe, he hath not only expreſſed his good will towards us by taking *Security* of our ſelves for our own Welfare, and obliging us to be happy by the moſt *tender* and *vigorous* Paſſion in our Natures, but hath alſo taken an effectual Courſe to diſcover to us the Good and Evil of our own Actions; Conſidering,

II. THAT he hath given us Reaſon to *diſcern* what Actions they are that make for our Happineſs and what not. 'Tis true, had he only implanted in our Breaſts a *blind* Deſire of Happineſs, without any Eye of Reaſon in our Heads to *guide* and *direct* our Actions towards it, we muſt have wandered in the dark for ever, till we had pined away our wretched Beings with a *hungry* and *unſatisfied* Deſire. But by giving us a *quick-ſighted* Faculty of Reaſon to *guide* and *conduct* this our blind Deſire, he hath taken ſufficient care not only to *excite* our Enquiry after the Way to Happineſs, but alſo to *inable* us

us to find it. For the natural tendencies of our Actions to our Happineſs or Miſery are ſo very *obvious* and *viſible*, that we can ſcarce open our Eyes and look abroad without *obſerving* them. For how can any man who makes any obſervations upon things, be ſo ſtupid as not to *diſcern* the vaſt Difference there is between *Truth* and *Falſhood*, *Juſtice* and *Injuſtice*, as to their natural tendency to the *Good* and *Hurt*, *Happineſs* and *Miſery* of Mankind? 'Tis true, if men will neglect *uſing* their Reaſon, they may be ignorant of the *plaineſt* Propoſitions; but if they be, 'tis their *inexcuſable* Folly. But if men will be ſo true to their own Intereſt, as calmly to *reflect* upon their Actions, their Senſe cannot more readily diſtinguiſh between *Honey* and *Gall*, than their Reaſon will beween *Virtue* and *Vice*; the fundamental Reaſons of which are ſo *legible* in all the Appearances of Nature, ſo *neceſſary* to the Being and Preſervation of Mankind, and their equity is ſo *apparent*, and their Convenience ſo *obvious*, that a man can hardly reflect upon any thing either *within* or *without* him, without being convinced of their Force and Obligation. So that for a man that hath the uſe of his Reaſon not to obſerve the Difference of his Actions, as

to

to their *intrinſick* Good and Evil, and *neceſſary* Tendency to his Happineſs and Miſery, would be as *groſs* and *unexcuſable* a Stupidity, as if he ſhould paſs through the World without ever taking notice that two and two make four. God therefore by giving us a Reaſonable Faculty to *diſcern* the nature of things, upon which the Differences of Good and Evil are ſo *plainly* and *legibly* imprinted, hath hereby taken ſufficient Care to ſhew us the difference of our own Actions. For, to inſpire us with a Faculty of *Reaſoning*, by which we can *form* true Notions of things from ſingle Experiment sand *infer* one truth from another, and *immediately* to inſpire this Faculty with *Divine* Truth, are only two different Modes of Divine *Revelation*; and God did as *really* reveal himſelf to us when he *gave* us Reaſon to underſtand his Will, as when he *ſent* to us his Meſſengers from Heaven to make known his mind and Will to us. For God hath ſo framed our Underſtandings, as that whenſoever we impartially reaſon about things, we are *forced* to diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil, and cannot perſuade our ſelves without doing infinite *Violence* to our own Faculties, that to *Blaſpheme* God or to *Reverence* him, to *lie* or *ſpeak Truth*, to

honour

honour our Parents or to *ſcorn* and *deſpiſe* them are things of an indifferent Nature; but as ſoon as ever we open the Eye of our Reaſon we diſcern ſuch an *eſſential* Difference between them, as forces us to *condemn* the one and *approve* the other. And accordingly as for the great ſtrokes of Iniquity, we find they have as much the Univerſal Judgment of our Reaſon againſt them as any *falſe Concluſion* in the Mathematicks; whilſt the Goodneſs of their contrary Vertues is as univerſally acknowledged by us as the Truth of any *firſt Principle* in Philoſophy. Since therefore God hath ſo framed our Underſtanding as that it cannot calmly reflect upon our Actions without diſtinguiſhing between the *good* and *bad*, he hath hereby ſufficiently *revealed* to us what that good is that *immutably* binds and obliges us.

III. God hath ſo contrived our Natures as that we are thruſt on by our own *Inſtincts* and *Paſſions* to thoſe Actions which are morally Good and do make for our Happineſs. For we are framed and conſtituted with ſuch Paſſions and Affections as do naturally *point* and *direct* us unto vertuous Actions; and tho by the Conſtitution of our Natures, our Paſſions are ſubjected to our Reaſon, and all our Ver-

tue conſiſts in being *reaſonably affected*, yet in the very Nature of our Paſſions there is a certain *Tendency* and *Direction* to Vertue, antecedent to all our *Reaſoning* and *Diſcourſe*. Which *Theages* the *Pythagorean* ſtiles a Παρόρμησις καὶ ἐνθυσιασμὸς τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἀρετῆς, *a certain natural Impetus or Enthuſiaſme by which without any previous Diſcourſe or Deliberation we are forcibly carried on towards vertuous Actions.* For ſome Affections there are in our Nature, which do in the *general* plainly ſignifie to us that there is ſuch a thing as Moral Good and Evil in Humane Actions; and others that do as plainly point out *what* thoſe Actions are wherein this moral good and evil is ſubjected. Of the firſt ſort are the Affections of Love and Hatred, Complacency and Horror, Glory and Shame, Repentance and Self-ſatisfaction; which plainly declare that there are *anſwerable* Objects in the Nature of Things and Actions; that there is a Good to be *beloved* and an Evil to be *hated*; a Deformity to be *abhorred* and a Beauty to be *delighted* in; an Excellency to be *gloried in* and a Filthineſs to be *aſhamed of*; a Well-doing to be *ſatisfied with* and an Ill doing to be *repented of*. For if there were no ſuch real Diſtinctions in the

the Nature of Things and Actions, all theſe Affections in us would be utterly *vain* and *impertinent*. And as *theſe* Affections of our Nature do ſignifie in the *general* that there *is* a moral Good and Evil in our Actions, ſo there are others which do *particularly* point out *what* Actions are morally Good and what Evil. Thus for Inſtance, the Paſſions of *Veneration* and *Diſdain* do plainly direct us to Honour God and our Superiors, and to be conſtant in good Courſes out of a generous *Scorn* of all Temptations to the contrary. Thus *Commiſeration* and *Envy* direct us to Charity and Juſtice, to *lament* and *aſſiſt* thoſe who are *undeſervedly* unfortunate, and to be *diſpleaſed* with the Advancement of *baſe* and *undeſerving* People; and conſequently to be *juſt* and *equal* in our Diſtributions, and to *proportion* them to mens Merit and Deſert. For by this Paſſion of Envy Nature teaches us that there is ſuch a thing as *juſt* and *unjuſt*, *equal* and *unequal*, and that the former is to be *embraced* and the latter to be *ſhunned*. And to name no more, thus *Sorrow* and *Joy* doth by a ſilent Language diſſwade us from *injuring* and perſwade us to *benefit* one another. For ſo by the mournful Voice, the dejected Eyes and Countenance, the Sighs and

Groans and Tears of the *ſorrowful* and *oppreſt*, (all which are the powerful Rhetorick of Nature) we are importuned not only to *forbear* heaping any further Injuries upon them, but alſo to *commiſerate* their Griefs, and by our timely Aids to *ſuccour* and *relieve* them. As on the contrary the florid and chearful Looks, the pleaſant and grateful Air which we behold in thoſe that *rejoyce*, are ſo many Charms and Attractives by which Nature allures us to mutual *Urbanity* and *Sweetneſs* of Behaviour, and a continual Study to *pleaſe* and *gratifie* one another. By theſe and many other Inſtances I might give, it is evident that tho by our own ill Government we too often *deprave* our Affections and *corrupt* them into Vices, yet their *natural* Drift and tendency lies towards Vertue. Thus by their own natural Light which they carry before us, they *direct* our ſteps to the Way we are to walk in, and point out all thoſe Tracts of eternal Goodneſs that lead to our Happineſs. For ſince theſe Affections are in us antecedently to all our Deliberations and Choices, it is evident they were placed there by the *Author* of our Natures; and therefore ſince 'tis *He* who hath inclined them to all that they naturally incline to, *He* doth in Effect direct

rect and guide us by *their* Inclinations. So that *their* natural Tendencies and Directions are the *Voice of God* in our Natures, which *murmurs* and *whiſpers* to us that natural Law which our Reaſon indeed doth more *plainly* and *articulately* promulge. And from this natural Tendency of our Affections to Good proceeds that *pleaſant* and *painful* Senſe of *good* and *bad* Actions which we experience in our ſelves before ever we can diſcourſe. For thus before we are capable of reaſoning our ſelves into any Pleaſure or Diſpleaſure, our Nature is *rejoyced* in a kind or juſt Action either in our ſelves or others, and we are ſenſibly *pleaſed* when we have pleaſured thoſe that oblige us, and as ſenſibly *grieved* when we are conſcious of having grieved and offended them. We *love* to ſee thoſe fare well who we imagine have deſerved well; and when any unjuſt Violence is offered them, our Nature *ſhrinks at* and *abhors* it. We *pity* and *compaſſionate* the miſerable when we know not *why*; and are ready to offer at their Relief when we can give no Reaſon for it; which ſhews that theſe things proceed not either from our *Education* or deliberate *Choice*, but from the Nature of our Affections which have a *Sympathy* with Vertue, and an *Antipathy* to Vice implanted

planted in their very Conſtitution. And hence it is that in the Beginnings of Sin our Nature is commonly ſo *ſhy* of an evil Action; that it approaches it with ſuch a modeſt *Coyneſs*, and goes *bluſhing* to it like a baſhful Virgin to an Adulterers Bed; that it paſſes into it with ſuch *Regret* and *Reluctancy*, and looks back upon it with ſuch *Shame* and *Confuſion*; which in our tender years, when as yet we are not arrived to the Exerciſe of our Underſtandings, cannot be ſuppoſed to proceed from *Reaſon* and *Conſcience*, and therefore muſt be from the *natural* Senſe of our Affections, which by theſe and ſuch like Indications do ſignifie that they are *violated* and *offended*. Now this natural Senſe of Good and Evil which ſprings from the *Frame* and *Nature* of our Affections, was doubtleſs intended by God to be the *firſt* guide of Humane Nature; that ſo when as yet 'tis not capable of following Reaſon and Conſcience, it might be directed to what is Good and be preſerved from wicked Habits and Prejudices by its own *Senſe* and *Feeling*, till ſuch time as it's capable of the Conduct of Reaſon; that ſo when this leading Faculty undertakes the Charge of it, it may find it *pliant* and *obſequious* to its *Dictates*; and be

be able to manage it with more *Eaſe* and *Facility*. And thus by the natural Drift and Tendency of our Affections God hath plainly *revealed* to us what is good and what not.

IV. GOD hath alſo entailed upon our Actions natural *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, and thereby plainly declared which are *good* and which *evil*. For it is eaſily demonſtrable by an Induction of Particulars, that every Vertue hath ſome natural Efficacy in it to advance both our *publick* Good and our *private* Intereſt. That *Temperance* and *Charity*, *Righteouſneſs* and *Fidelity*, *Gratitude* and *Humility* are not only *convenient*, but abſolutely *neceſſary* to our Joy and Comfort, our Peace and Quietneſs, our Safety and Contentment; to the Health of our *Body* and the Satisfaction of our *Mind*, and the Security and Happineſs of our *Society* with one another. Whereas on the contrary, Vice naturally teems with *miſchievous* Effects, and is ever productive of *Horror* in the Conſcience, *Anguiſh* in the mind, *Diſcord* in the Affections, *Diſeaſes* in the Body, and *Confuſions* and *Diſturbances* in Humane Society. Since therefore the Divine Wiſdom and Contrivance hath thus inſeparably coupled good Effects to good Actions and evil ones to evil, it hath hereby very *plainly* and

ſenſibly declared to us what it would have us *do* and what *not*. For ſeeing it hath ſo conſtituted things as that in the Courſe of Nature ſuch Proportions of *Happineſs* do neceſſarily reſult to us from *ſuch* Actions, and ſuch Proportions of *Miſery* from their *Contraries*, what can be more evident than that its Deſign was hereby to *encourage* us to the one and *affright* us from the other? So that by theſe *natural* Rewards and Puniſhments which in the Courſe of things God hath chained to our Actions, he hath as *expreſly* preſcribed us what to do and what not, as he could have done if he had ſpoken to us in an *audible* voice from the Battlements of Heaven. For ſince the whole Train of Natural Effects is to be reſolved into the *Providence* of God, and ſince his Providence hath ſo *ordered* and *contrived* things as that in the ordinary Courſe of them *good* Effects do ſpring out of *good* Actions and *evil* out of *evil* ones, what elſe could he intend by it but to *allure* us to the one, and *terrifie* us from the other? For it is by *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* that all Lawgivers declare their Will and Pleaſure concerning thoſe Actions which they *command* and *forbid*; and therefore ſince God in his Providential Government of the World hath thought

thought good to link natural *Rewards* to *ſuch* Actions, and natural *Puniſhments* to *ſuch*, theſe are to be lookt upon as the great *Sanctions* of the Law of Nature, whereby he commands what *pleaſes* and prohibits what *diſpleaſes* him. For when God had no otherwiſe revealed himſelf to the World than only by the eſtablſht *Courſe* and *Nature* of things, *that* was the great *Bible* by which alone Mankind was inſtructed in their Duty; and there being no *revealed* Threats or Promiſes annexed to good and bad Actions, Gods Will and Pleaſure concerning them was *viſible* only in the *good* and *bad* Conſequents which they drew after them; which are ſo *plain* and *obvious* to the Obſervation of Mankind, that 'twould be the moſt *inexcuſable* Inadvertency not to take Notice of them. So that the *moral* Good and Evil of all Actions, finally reſolves into the *natural* Good and Evil that is appendant to them; and therefore are our Actions morally *good* becauſe they are naturally *beneficial* to us, and therefore morally *evil* becauſe they are naturally *prejudicial* and *hurtful*; and thoſe which in their own nature are neither good nor evil, are *indifferent* in themſelves, and left altogether *undetermined* by the Law of Nature, which *commands*

and

and *forbids* nothing but under the Sanction of those *natural* Rewards and Punishments which in the Course of things are made necessary to Humane Actions.

V. To these *natural* Rewards and Punishments which God hath entailed upon good and bad Actions, he hath thought good many times to superadd *supernatural Blessings* and *Judgments*. For tho he had before sufficiently expressed his Will concerning Humane Actions in the great *Bible of Nature*, and by their *natural* Effects had plainly enough distinguished the *good* from the *bad*; yet considering what *heedless* and *inobservant* Creatures we are, and how apt to *overlook* the ordinary Consequents of our Actions, he hath not altogether abandoned us to the easie Instructions of Nature, but out of his superabundant Care to shew us what is Good and lead us to our Duty and Happiness, he hath from time to time seconded the *natural* Rewards and Punishments of our Actions with *supernatural Favours* and *Judgments*; that so by these he might awake our *drowsie* Attention, and revive in us the *languishing* sense of our Duty. Of which we have infinite Instances in the several Ages of the World; there being scarce any History either Sacred or Prophane

Profane that abounds not with them. Several of which both Bleſſings and Judgments do as plainly evince themſelves to be *intended* by God for *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, as if they had been attended with a Voice from Heaven proclaiming the Reaſons for which they were ſent. For how many famous Inſtances have of we miraculous *Deliverances* of *Righteous* Perſons, who by an *Inviſible* Hand have been *reſcued* from the greateſt Dangers, when in all outward appearance their Condition was *hopeleſs* and *deſperate*; and of wonderful *Bleſſings* that have hapned to them not only *without*, but *contrary* to all ſecondary Cauſes; of ſome that have been ſo eminently rewarded *in kind*, as that the Goods which they *received* were moſt viſible Significations of the Goods which they *did*; of others who have received the Bleſſings which they have asked, *whilſt* they were *praying* for them, and obtained them with ſuch *diſtinguiſhing* Circumſtances as plainly ſignified them to be the *Anſwers* and *Returns* of their devout Addreſſes to Heaven? And ſo on the contrary, how many notable Examples are there of ſuch miraculous *Judgments* inflicted upon *unrighteous* Perſons, as have either *exceeded* the Power of ſecondary Cauſes or been

caused

cauſed by them *contrary* to their *natural* tendencies; of men that have been puniſhed in the very *Act* of their Sin, and ſometimes in the very *Part* by which they have offended; that have had the evil of their *Sin* retaliated upon them in a *correſpondent* Evil of *Suffering*, and been *ſtruck* with thoſe very Judgments which they have *imprecated* on themſelves in the Juſtification of a known Falſhood? All which *ſupernatural* Judgments and Bleſſings of God are only his *Comments* on the *Text* of Nature, by which he farther explains to us the *Meaning* of thoſe *natural* Rewards and Puniſhments which Vertue and Vice draw after them, and ſhews us what clear *Indications* they are of his Almighty *Pleaſure* and *Diſpleaſure*. For when he *rewards* men *ſupernaturally* it is for thoſe Actions that carry a *natural* Reward with them, and when he *puniſhes* them *ſupernaturally* it is for ſuch Actions as do carry a *natural* Puniſhment with them; ſo that his *ſupernatural* Rewards and Puniſhments do ſpeak the *ſame* Senſe and Language with his *natural*, only they ſpeak *plainer* and *louder* to rouſe and awake thoſe *ſtupid* Souls that are *deaf* to and *regardleſs* of the ſoft and ſtill voice of *natural* Rewards and Puniſhments. Thus when the old World

World by not attending to the *natural* Conſequents of their own Actions had almoſt extinguiſhed their Senſe of Good and Evil, God by a *ſupernatural Deluge* in which he drowned the *wicked* and preſerved the *righteous*, conſigned to all future Generations a ſtanding *Monument* of his *Hatred* of *Sin* and *Love* of *Righteouſneſs*; that ſo by the *Remembrance* of it he might keep Mens *heedleſs* Minds more attentive to the *natural* Rewards and Puniſhments of their Actions. And when the Remembrance of *this* was almoſt *worn out*, and with it mens *natural* Senſe of good and evil, God by *raining down* Fire and Brimſtone upon *Sodom* and *Gomorra*, and *reſcuing* the Righteous *Lot* from that dire Conflagration, alarmed the World with a new *Declaration* of the wide Diſtinction he makes between Vertue and Vice. And laſtly, when the Vertue of theſe great Examples was almoſt *ſpent*, God raiſed up the People of *Iſrael*, and by the miraculous *Bleſſings* he beſtowed on them when they did *well*, and the ſtupendous *Judgments* he inflicted when they did *wickedly*, expoſed them to all the Nations round about for a ſtanding *Demonſtration* of the vaſt Difference he makes between Good and Evil. For ſo the Pſalmiſt tells us,

Pſalm

Pſalm 98. verſe 2. compared with *Pſalm* 102. verſe 15. *The Lord hath made known his Salvation, his Righteouſneſs hath he openly ſhewed in the ſight of the Heathen; that the Heathen might fear the Name of the Lord, and all the Kings of the Earth his Glory.* Thus by frequent Examples of *ſupernatural* Rewards and Puniſhments God hath been always *inſtructing* the degenerate World in the eſſential Differences between Good and Evil.

VI. AND laſtly, To inforce all this God hath made ſundry ſupernatural *Revelations*, wherein he hath plainly inſtructed us what Actions are *good* and what *evil*. That he hath made ſundry *Revelations* to the World is evident in Fact, becauſe there are ſundry Revelations *extant*, which by thoſe many miraculous Effects of the Divine *Power* that attended the Miniſtration of them, have been ſufficiently demonſtrated to be of a *divine Original*. And ſuch are thoſe contained in the five Books of *Moſes*, and the *Prophets*, which have been all moſt amply *confirmed*, both by the *Miracles* which were wrought by their inſpired Authors, and the exact *Accompliſhment* of the ſeveral *Predictions* contained in them. And ſuch is alſo the *laſt* and *beſt* Revelation contained in the *New Teſtament*; which both

both by the *Types* and *Predictions* of the *Law* and *Prophets*, and the infinite *Miracles* wrought by *Jeſus* and his Followers, together with its own *inherent* Wiſdom and Goodneſs, hath been ſo effectually proved a *divine Revelation*, that nothing but Ignorance or inveterate Prejudice can cauſe any man to *disbelieve* or *ſuſpect* it.

NOW if you conſult theſe ſeveral Revelations, you will find that the main Drift and Deſign of them is to *detect* and *expoſe* what is morally evil, and *explain* and *recommend* to us what is morally good. For thus the ſeveral Revelations made to *Abraham* and his Children, were only ſo many *Repetitions* of that *Covenant of Righteouſneſs* which God had ſtruck with them, to encourage them to perſevere in Well-doing. Thus the Law of *Moſes* conſiſted partly of *Ceremonial Rites*, which were either intended for Divine *Hieroglyphics* to inſtruct that *dull* and *ſtupid* People in the Principles of inward Purity and Goodneſs, or elſe for *Types* and *Figures* of the holy Myſteries of the Goſpel: and partly of Precepts of *Morality*, together with ſome few of *Policy*, ſuited to the Genius of that People; and partly of ſuch *Promiſes* and *Threats* as were judged moſt apt to oblige them to the Practice of Piety.

And

And as for the *Prophets*, the ſubſtance of their Revelations was either *Reprehenſions* of Sin together with ſevere *Denunciations* againſt it; or *Invitations* to Vertue and Piety together with gracious *Promiſes* to encourage them to practiſe it; or *Predictions* of the *Meſſias* and of that *everlaſting Righteouſneſs* which was to be introduced by him. And then as for the *Goſpel*, all the Duty of it conſiſts either in *Inſtances*, or *Means* and *Inſtruments* of Moral Goodneſs; and all the *Doctrins* of it are nothing but powerful *Arguments* to oblige us to the Practice of thoſe Duties. Thus the great Intendment of all Gods Revelations is to *explain* and *enforce* the Duties of Morality; to diſcover the *Nature*, and lead us on to the *Practice* of them by the moſt powerful Obligations. And in this moſt perfect *Map* of the Road to Happineſs, all the *Tracts* of Piety and Vertue are ſo plainly *deſcribed* and *delineated* to us, that no man can poſſibly *miſs* his Way, that ſincerely *inquires* after it. For tho in matters of *Opinion* men may be *innocently* miſlead and deceived, yet there is no Article either of *Doctine* or *Duty* upon which our Happineſs neceſſarily depends, wherein it is poſſible for an *honeſt* and *diligent* Mind to be miſtaken. And thus you

ſee

ſee by how many excellent Ways God hath *diſcovered* to us which of our Actions are good and which evil. So that if after all this we proceed in any ſinful and immoral Courſes, we are utterly *inexcuſable*. For if after God hath thus *plainly* made known his Will to us, we ſtill perſiſt to contradict it in our *Practice*, we do thereby in effect declare that we *regard not* the Almighty, and that we will *do* what we liſt, let him *will* what he pleaſes. And what an unpardonable Inſolence is it for us who depend upon his Breath, and hang upon his Providence every moment, to treat him as if he had nothing to do with us, and were the mereſt *Cypher* and moſt *inſignificant* Being in the World? For though 'tis true he hath not made ſo *full* a Diſcovery of his Will to *ſome* as to *others*, yet he hath ſo *ſufficiently* diſcovered it to *all*, that none can pretend to the Excuſe either of *invincible* or *unaffected* Ignorance. For as for the Heathen, though they have no Revelation of Gods Will *without* them, yet they have the Bible of Conſcience *within* them, and the large and legible Bible of Nature that lies continually open *before* them, in which they may eaſily read the *principal* Differences between Good and Evil, and all the great

Principles of Morality. And if notwithſtanding this they will be ſo regardleſs of God as not to *attend* to and *comply* with thoſe natural Diſcoveries of his Will, what Pretence can be made for them why they ſhould not periſh for ever in their Obſtinacy? For as the Apoſtle tells us, *though they had not the Law*, that is, the revealed Law, *yet they did*, or at leaſt might have done, *by nature the things contained in the Law; and therefore as many of them*, ſaith he, *as ſinned without* this revealed *Law, ſhall periſh without the Law*, that is, by the Sentence of the Law of Nature, *Rom.* 2. 12, 14. And then as for the *Jews*, beſides thoſe *natural* Indications of Gods Will which they had in common with the Heathen, they had ſundry *ſupernatural* ones; they had ſundry great and notorious Examples of Gods *rewarding* good men, and *puniſhing* bad; and beſides they had the Law of *Moſes*, the *Moral* part of which was but a *new Edition* of the Law of Nature; as for the *Ceremonial* Part of it, it was though an *obſcure*, yet an *intelligible* Repreſentation of all thoſe ſublime Motives to Piety and Vertue, which the Goſpel more *plainly* propoſes. So that would the *Jews* but have heedfully attended either to the *ſpiritual Senſe* of their Law, or to the

the *Sermons* of their *Prophets* which very much *cleared* and *explained* it, they could not have been ignorant either of any material Part of their *Duty*, or of any conſiderable *Motive* by which it is preſſed and inforced. And if notwithſtanding, they would be ſo *regardleſs* of God, as to take no notice of his *Judgments* and *Mercies*; ſo rude to his Authority as not to mind either his Law *within* or his Law *without* them, upon what reaſonable Pretence can they excuſe themſelves? But then as for us Chriſtians we have not only all thoſe *natural* Diſcoveries of out Duty which the *Heathen* had, and all thoſe *Supernatural* ones which the *Jews* had, but a great deal more. For in our Revelation the *Laws* and *Motives* of Vertue are ſet before us in a much *clearer* Light, and are neither wrapt up in *Myſtical* Senſes, nor overcaſt with *typical* Repreſentations, but laid before us in the moſt plain and eaſie Propoſitions. For that which was the *Myſtical* Senſe of the Jewiſh Law, is the *literal* Senſe of the Chriſtian; in which all thoſe Precepts and Promiſes and Threats which were delivered to the *Jews* in *dark* Riddles, *obſcure* and *typical* Adumbrations, are brought forth to us from behind the Curtain, and propoſed in plain and popular Articles. So

that if *we* ſtill continue in our ſinful Courſes, we are of all men the moſt *inexcuſable*. The Heathen may plead againſt the *Jews*, that *their* Law of Nature was not ſo *clear* in its Precepts, nor yet ſo *cogent* in its Motives as the Law of *Moſes*; the *Jews* may plead againſt us Chriſtians, that *their* Law of *Moſes* was neither ſo *expreſs* in its Precepts, nor yet ſo *intelligible* in its beſt and moſt powerful Motives as *our* Goſpel; but as for us Chriſtians, we have nothing to plead, but by our own Obſtinacy againſt the *cleareſt* Diſcoveries of our Duty do ſtand condemned to everlaſting Silence. So that when it ſhall appear at the dread Tribunal of God, that we have perſiſted in our wickedneſs notwithſtanding all *theſe* Advantages, we muſt expect to be *reproached* by all the Reaſonable World, to be *exploded* and *hiſs'd at*, not only by Saints and Angels, but by the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, and the Devils themſelves, who will all conſpire with our own Conſciences to *ſecond* our woful Doom with the Loud Acclamation of *Juſt and Righteous art thou O Lord in all thy Ways*. Wherefore as we would not periſh for ever without *Pity* and *Excuſe*, let us make haſt to forſake all *ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.*

SECT. III.

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That thoſe Actions which carry with them this perpetual Obligation are the main *and* principal *Parts of Religion.*

THE truth of which is moſt evident from the abovenamed Text, *Mic.* 6. 8. *and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Which Interrogation tho it implies not an *abſolute* Negation, *viz.* that the Lord required *nothing elſe* of them (for under the Law he required *Sacrifices* and ſundry other poſitive Duties, as under the Goſpel he requires *Sacraments* and *Reading* and *Hearing* his holy Word, &c. which are *poſitive* Duties as well as thoſe legal Inſtitutions of *Moſes*;) yet it plainly implies a *comparative* Negation, *viz.* that the Lord requires nothing elſe ſo *principally* and *affectionately*, ſo for the ſake of the *things themſelves* and upon the account of their own *inherent* Beauty and Goodneſs, as he doth theſe Moral Duties here ſpecified. He did indeed *require* the *Jews* to offer *Sacrifice* to him and to perform thoſe other *Ceremonial Rites* ſpecified in the

Law of *Moſes*; and for them wilfully to have neglected thoſe Duties would have been ſuch an avowed Defiance to his Authority as would have rendred them juſtly obnoxious to all the Judgments threatned in their Law; but yet he did much more *earneſtly* require them to be *juſt* and *merciful* and *humble*, and manifeſted himſelf to be far better pleaſed with *one* Act of Moral Goodneſs than with a *thouſand* Sacrifices. And thus he requires of us Chriſtians that we ſhould communicate with him and with one another in our *Evangelical Sacraments*, and dutifully conform to all thoſe ſacred *Inſtitutions* and *Solemnities* of Religion which are contained in the Goſpel; and if we wilfully neglect them we juſtly incur all that everlaſting Vengeance which is there denounced; but yet our ſincere compliance with the *immutable* Obligations of Piety and Vertue, is a thouſandfold *more* acceptable to God than our ſtricteſt Obſervation of theſe his *poſitive* Inſtitutions. So that the Queſtion in the Text *what doth the Lord require of thee* plainly implies this Propoſition, that tho God doth exact of us certain Duties which are *not* moral, *i. e.* have no *intrinſick* neceſſity in them, yet it is the Moral Duties, ſuch as *Juſtice* and *Mercy*

Mercy and *Humility* which he principally requires at our hand. Thus concerning *Sacrifice*, God plainly tells us, *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice, i. e.* I will have Mercy *rather* than Sacrifice, *Hoſ.* 6. 6. And the Wiſe man aſſures us that *to do Juſtice is more acceptable to the Lord than Sacrifice*, Prov. 21. 3. And to the ſame purpoſe our Saviour himſelf pronounceth, even before that Ceremonial Worſhip was Aboliſhed, that *to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our underſtanding, with all our Soul, and with all our ſtrength, and to love our neighbour as our ſelves is more than all burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices, Mark* 12. 33. But for the clearer Demonſtration of this great and neceſſary Truth, I ſhall endeavour, Firſt, to prove the *Truth* of it by ſome Scripture Arguments, Secondly, to aſſign the *Reaſons* of it. As for the *Proof* of it, the following Particulars will be abundantly ſufficient,

Firſt, THAT the Scripture plainly declares that the great *Deſign* of all the *Doctrinals* of Religion hath always been to *move* and *perſwade* men to the practice of Moral Goodneſs.

Secondly, THAT the main *Drift* and *Scope* of all the *poſitive* Duties of Religion hath been always to *improve* and *perfect* men in Moral Goodneſs. *Thirdly*,

Thirdly, THAT God expreſſes in Scripture a great *Contempt* of all the *poſitive* Duties of Religion when ever they are *ſeparated* from Moral Goodneſs.

Fourthly, THAT where ever we find the *Whole* of Religion *ſumm'd up* in a few Particulars, they are always ſuch as are Inſtances of Moral Goodneſs.

Fifthly, THAT wherever ſuch *Perſons* as have been moſt *dear* and *acceptable* to God are *deſcribed* in Scripture, their *Character* always conſiſts of ſome Inſtances or other of Moral Goodneſs.

Sixthly, THAT the Scripture plainly declares that at the *great Account* between God and our Souls, the main *Inquiſition* will be concerning our Moral Good or Evil.

I. THE Scripture expreſly declares that the great *Deſign* of the *Doctrins* of Religion is to *move* and *perſwade* men to Moral Goodneſs. For ſo the Apoſtle ſpeaking of the *Grace of God, i. e.* the Goſpel, aſſures us that its great Deſign is *to teach men to deny all ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and Godly in this preſent World. Tit.* 2. 12. And if we conſider the Doctrines in *Particular*, we ſhall find that they all conſpire in this great Deſign. For ſo the Doctrine of *eternal life* is propoſed by God to perſwade us *to cleanſe*

cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the feat of God, 2. *Cor.* 7. 1. So alſo the Doctrine of our *future Puniſhment* is levell'd againſt *all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men, Rom.* 1. 18. And as for thoſe Doctrines which concern the *Tranſactions* of our Saviour, they are all propoſed to us as *Arguments* to perſwade us to Piety and Vertue. For 'twas *for this cauſe that Chriſt was manifeſted, to deſtroy the works of the Devil,* 1 *John* 3. 8. 'twas for this purpoſe that *he bore our ſins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to ſin ſhould live to Righteouſneſs,* 1 *Pet.* 2. 24. 'twas for this end that he *roſe from the dead,* that thereby he might prevail with us to *walk in newneſs of life, Rom.* 6. 4. and 'tis for this end that he *intercedes for us* at the right hand of God, that thereby he might encourage us *to come to God by him, Heb.* 7. 2. and in a word, for this cauſe he hath told us he will *come to Judgment,* to reward every man according to his works, that thereby he might ſtir us up to Sobriety and Vigilance and to *all holy converſation and Godlineſs, Mat.* 24. 42. compared with 2 *Pet.* 3. verſe 11. Thus you ſee all the Doctrines of Religion are only ſo many *Topics* of divine *Perſwaſion,* whereby God addreſſes himſelf to our

Hope and *Fear* and every other *Affection* in us that is capable of Perſwaſion, to *excite* us to comply with the eternal Obligations of Morality; and there is no one *Article* in all our Religion, that is matter of mere *Speculation*, or that entertains our Minds with *dry* and *empty* Notions that have no Influence on our *Wills* and *Affections*. For ſince the Deſign of Religion in *General*, is to *bind* and *faſten* our Souls to God, we may be ſure that there is no *Part* of it but what doth in ſome meaſure contribute hereunto. Since therefore 'tis moral Goodneſs that God chiefly recommends to us by the Perſwaſions of Religion, we may be ſure that what his *Arguments* do chiefly *perſwade* us to, that his *Commands* do chiefly *oblige* us to.

II. FROM Scripture it is alſo evident that the main *Drift* and *Scope* of all the *poſitive* Duties of Religion is to *improve* and *perfect* men in moral Goodneſs. We find the *Jewiſh* Religion exceedingly abounded with *poſitive* Precepts; for *ſuch* were all thoſe ſacred *Rites* and *Solemnities* of which the Bark and Outſide of that Religion conſiſted; of all which 'tis true what the Pſalmiſt ſaith of *Sacrifices* in particular, *thou deſireſt not Sacrifices, thou delighteſt not in burnt-Offerings, Pſal.* 51. 16.

51. 16. that is, thou takeſt no delight in them upon the ſcore of any *internal* Goodneſs that is in them, but deſireſt them merely as they are *inſtituted means* and *Inſtruments* of Moral Goodneſs. For ſo many of the Rites of the *Moſaic* Law were inſtituted in oppoſition to the *Magical*, *Unclean* and *Idolatrous* Rites of the *Eaſtern* Heathen. As particularly, that Prohibition of *ſowing their Fields with mingled Seed*, *Lev.* 19. 19. in Oppoſition to that *Magical* Rite which the Heathens uſed as a *Charm* for Fructification. So alſo that Command of ſprinkling the Blood of their Sacrifices upon the Ground like Water and covering it with Duſt, in Oppoſition to that *Idolatrous* Rite of gathering the Blood into a *Trench* or *Veſſel*, and then *ſitting round* it in a Circle, whilſt they imagined their gods to be *licking* it up. And to name no more of this kind, the Prohibition of *ſeething a Kid in his Mothers Milk*, *Exod.* 23. 19. was in Oppoſition to a Cuſtom of the Ancient Heathen, who at the *Ingathering* of their Fruits were wont to take a Kid and ſeeth it in the milk of its Dam, and then in a *Magical Proceſſion* to ſprinkle all their *Trees* and *Fields* and *Gardens* with it, thereby to render them more fruitful the following Year. Beſides all which

which you may find a World of other Inſtances in *Maimonides More-Nevoch. lib.* 3. who tells us, that the Knowledg of the Opinions and Cuſtoms of theſe Eaſtern Heathens was *porta magna ad reddendas præceptorum cauſas, the great Rationale of the Moſaic Precepts*; and that *multarum legum rationes & cauſæ mihi innotuerint ex cognitione fidei, rituum & Cultus Zabiorum*; i. e. *that by being acquainted with the opinions and cuſtoms of thoſe Eaſtern Heathens he underſtood the grounds and reaſons of many of the Laws of* Moſes, *More-Nevoch. lib.* 3. *cap.* 29. So that tho theſe Precepts were *not* Moral, yet were they ſet up as ſo many *Fences* by God, to keep his People from *ſtragling* into thoſe Heathen Immoralities.

AGAIN, there are *other* Rites of their Religion, which were inſtituted to *ſhadow* out the *Holy Myſteries* of the Goſpel; the great Deſign of which Myſteries was to *invite* and *perſwade* men to comply with the eternal Laws of Morality. Thus their Laws of *Sacrifice* were inſtituted to *repreſent* to them the great Tranſactions of their future *Meſſias*; his *Incarnation* and immaculate Life, his *Death* and *Reſurrection, Aſcenſion* and *Interceſſion* at the right hand of God. So alſo their *Feſtival* Laws, and

and particularly their Laws of *Jubilee*, were made to *ſhadow* out the Doctrines of our *Redemption* and *eternal Life*; and their powring out *Water* in their Sacrifices, and their Ritual *Purgations* from uncleanneſs, were intended for obſcure *Intimations* of the *Effuſion* of the holy Spirit, and the Doctrine of *Remiſſion of Sins*; all which Doctrines carry with them the moſt *pregnant* Invitations to Piety and Vertue.

Laſtly. THERE are other Rites of that Law which were appointed to *inſtruct* them in Moral Duties. For God finding them not only a *perverſe* but a *dull* and *ſottiſh* People, as thoſe generally are that have been born and bred in *Slavery*, apprehended that the moſt effectual way to inſtruct them would be by *Signs* and material *Repreſentations*, even as Parents do their Children by *Pictures*. And accordingly in *Iſaiah* 28. 10. he tells us that *he gave them line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, with a ſtammering tongue*; *i. e.* he look'd upon them as *Children*, and ſo condeſcended to their *Weakneſs*, and ſpake to them in their own *Dialect*. And this way of inſtructing them by *outward* and *viſible* Signs, being much in uſe in the *Eaſtern* Countries, and more eſpecially in *Egypt*, whoſe manners they

they were infinitely *fond* of, was of all others the moſt *probable* and *taking*. And accordingly a great part of the Jewiſh Rites conſiſted of *Hieroglyphics*, or *viſible* Signs, by which their minds were *inſtructed* in the Precepts of Morality. Thus by *Circumciſion* God ſignified to them the neceſſity of *mortifying* their *unchaſt* Deſires; by their *Legal Waſhings* he intimated to them their Obligation to *cleanſe* themſelves from all *Impurities* of Fleſh and Spirit; yea this, as St. *Barnabas* in his Epiſtle tells us, was the Intent of all that Difference of *Meats* in the Jewiſh Law, which pronounced *Swines fleſh unclean*, to inſtruct them not to live like Hogs, that *wallow* in the Mire while they are *full*, and *whine* and *clamor* when they are *empty*; which forbid them to feed on *Eagles* and other Birds of *Prey*, to inſtruct them to live by *honeſt Induſtry*, and not by *Rapine*; which prohibits Fiſh without *Scales*, that generally live in the *Mud*, to teach the evil of *Senſuality* and *earthly-mindedneſs*, &c. From all which it is evident that Moral Goodneſs was the conſtant *Mark* at which all the poſitive Precepts of their Law were *levelled*.

AND then as for the *Chriſtian* Religion, all the *poſitive* Precepts it contains are directed to the *ſame* End. It requires us to

to *believe* in Jesus Christ, and in his Mediation to *draw near unto God*; the Design of which *Faith* it expresly tells us is to *Sanctifie our natures*, *Acts* 26. 18. and to *purifie our hearts*, *Acts* 15. 9. It enjoyns us to be *Baptized* into the name of Jesus; and for what purpose? but to oblige us thereby to *die to sin and to walk in newness of life*, *Rom.* 6. 4. It requires us to *commemorate* our Saviour's Passion in a *Sacramental Communion* of his Body and Blood; and to what End? but only to excite us to *Love* and *Thankfulness* to God, and *Charity* towards one another, 1 *Cor.* 5. 7, 8. In a word, it requires us to live in *Unity* with the *Church*, and not to *separate* our selves from her sacred Assemblies; and for what other reason? but that we might become *an holy Temple, and an habitation of God*, by being *compacted* together into an *uniform* and *regular* Society, *Eph.* 2. 21, 22. Since therefore all the Precepts both of the *Old* and *New* Testament which are *purely positive*, do bear a *Respect* to Moral Goodness, and were imposed by God in *subserviency* thereunto, it is evident that that is the *principal* Mark which he *designs* and *aims* at.

III. ANOTHER Evidence from Scripture that Moral Goodness is the *principal* Matter

Matter of our Duty, is the great *Contempt* which God expreſſes of the *poſitive* Duties of Religion when ever they are *ſeparated* from moral Goodneſs. For thus concerning the Poſitives of the *Jewiſh* Religion, we are told that *the Sacrifice of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord. Prov.* 15. 8. And concerning the *Whole* of their *poſitive* Religion, the Prophet thus pronounces in the Name of God, *to what purpoſe is the multitude of your Sacrifices to me ſaith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-Offerings of Rams, and of the fat of fed Beaſts, i.e,* ſo full as that I loath them; *and I delight not in the blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required theſe things at your hands, to tread my Courts? bring no more vain Oblations, Incenſe is Abomination to me; the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Aſſemblies I cannot away with; it is Iniquity, even the Solemn meetings. Your new Moons and your appointed Feaſts my Soul hateth, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them. And when you ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes, yea, when ye make many Prayers I will not hear.* And what I beſeech you is the reaſon that God ſhould thus diſlike his *own* Inſtitutions? why he plainly tells you, *your hands*

are

are full of blood, your *Cruelty* and *Oppreſſion* doth *prophane* your Worſhip, and turn it all into *Impiety*, *Iſai.* 1. 11. to the 16th. For ſo *Iſai.* 66. 3. he plainly tells them, *he that killeth an Ox, is as if he ſlew a Man; he that Sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dogs neck; he that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swines blood; he that burneth Incenſe, as if he bleſſed an Idol*; and why ſo? why *they have choſen their own ways, i. e.* of Impiety and Wickedneſs, and *their Soul delighteth in their Abominations.* Nor doth God expreſs a leſs *Contempt* of the Poſitives of *Chriſtianity*, when *ſeparated* from Moral Goodneſs. For thus St. *James* tells us even of our *Faith* or *Belief* in Jeſus, that *without Works it is dead*; that it is a *ſenſleſs, ſqualid* thing that hath neither *Life* nor *Beauty* in it, *James* 2. 17. And S. *Peter* compares *Baptiſm* to *the waſhing of a Swine* when it is ſeparated from Purity of Life and Manners, 2 *Pet.* 2. 22. And our receiving the *Lords Supper* without Charity and Devotion is by St. *Paul* ſtiled *coming together to Condemnation*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 34. All which is a plain Demonſtration that moral Goodneſs is the *principal* matter that God inſiſts on; ſince 'twas *this* that *ſanctified* the Sacrifices of the Jews,

and *crowned* all their Ceremonial Obſervances with the divine Acceptation, and *without* this all their other Services were *noiſom* and *offenſive* to him; and it is this that *perfumes* our Faith and our Sacraments, our Prayers and Religious Aſſemblies, and renders them a *grateful* and *ſweet ſmelling ſavor* in the Noſtrils of God, and *without* this they are all a hateful *ſtench* and *Annoyance* to him. Doubtleſs therefore the *principal* Matter of Duty which God requires of us, is that which he eſteems the *Grace* and *Fragrancy* of all our other Duties.

IV. ANOTHER Evidence from Scripture that moral Goodneſs is the principal matter that God requires of us, is, that where ever we find the *Whole* of Religion *ſummed up* in a few Particulars, they are always ſuch as are *Parts* and *Inſtances* of moral Goodneſs. Thus in the above cited *Mic.* 6. *what doth the Lord require of thee? but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* Thus alſo the Prophet *Iſaiah* giving an account to his People what they were to do in order to their Reconciliation with God, thus directs them, *waſh ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek*

ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judg the Fatherleſs, plead for the Widow; come now, and let us reaſon together ſaith the Lord, Iſai. 1. 16. 17, 18. So alſo our bleſſed Saviour ſums up the *Whole Duty of Man* into two Particulars, and what are they? why *thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind; this is the firſt and great Commandment. And the ſecond is like unto it, thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf; on theſe two Commandments hang the Law and the Prophets, Mat.* 22. 37, 38, 39, 40. Thus St. *James, True Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to viſit the Fatherleſs and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the Word, James* 1. 27. And elſewhere the Apoſtle *ſums up* the whole Law into one leading *Head* of Morality, and that is *Love, for love,* ſaith he, *is the fulfilling of the Law, Rom.* 13. 10. So this Obſervation generally holds true, that in all thoſe *Summaries* of Duty mentioned in the holy Scripture, only *ſuch* Duties are taken Notice of as are *Parts* and *Inſtances* of Morality. Which is a plain Demonſtration that 'tis this which God principally *requires,* ſince 'tis this which he moſt *takes notice of*; and it may be reaſonably ſup-

poſed that in thoſe Summaries of our Duty wherein but a *few* Parts are enumerated, they are ſuch as are the *Chief* and *principal*; it being contrary to all Rules of Language to expreſs the *Whole* of any thing, by the *meaneſt* and moſt *inconſiderable* Parts of it.

V. ANOTHER Evidence from Scripture that Moral Goodneſs is the *principal* Matter of Duty that God requires of us, is, that whereſoever ſuch *Perſons* as have been moſt *dear* and *acceptable* to God are *deſcribed*, their *Character* is always made up of Inſtances of Morality. Thus the Deſcription of *Job* is, *that he was a man perfect and upright and one that feared God and eſchewed evil*, *Job* 1. 1. And in the 15th. *Pſalm* the Deſcription which *David* gives of the man who ſhould abide in the Tabernacle of the Lord, is this, that *he walketh uprightly, and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh the truth in his heart; that he backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his Neighbour, &c. he that doth theſe things*, ſaith he, *ſhall never be moved.* And the greateſt Character that is given of *Moſes* the *Darling* and *Favorite* of God, is, that *he was very meek above all the men that were upon the face of the Earth,*

Earth, Numb. 12.3. Thus alſo the Character of *Cornelius* by which he was ſo *indeared* to God, is, that *he was a juſt and devout man, one that feared God with all his houſe, who gave much Alms to the people and prayed to God always, Acts* 10. 2. And in a word, the *general* Character of thoſe whom God *accepts*, is, *in every Nation he who doth righteouſneſs is accepted of God, Acts* 10. 35. Thus moral Goodneſs is the great *Stamp* and *Impreſs* that renders men *current* in the Eſteem of God; whereas on the contrary, the common *Brand* by which *Hypocrites* and falſe Pretenders to Religion are *ſtigmatized*, is their being *zealous* for the *Poſitives*, and *cold* and *indifferent* as to the *Morals* of Religion. For ſo our Saviour Characters the Phariſees; *woe unto you Scribes, and Phariſees, Hypocrites; for ye pay tyth of Mint, Annis, and Cummin*, which yet was a *poſitive* Duty, *and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faithfulneſs; theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind Guides, ye ſtrain at a Gnat and ſwallow a Camel, Math.* 23. 23. 24. plainly implying the Morals of Religion to be as much greater than the Poſitives in *weight* and *moment*, as a Camel is than a Gnat in *bulk*. Since there-

fore Moral Goodneſs is always *mentioned* as the great Character of Gods *Favourites*, and the Neglect of it out of a pretended zeal to the *poſitive* Duties of Religion is always *recorded* as a Mark of the moſt odious *Hypocrites*; this is a ſufficient Argument how high a *Value* God ſets upon the Moralities of Religion.

VI. and Laſtly, ANOTHER Evidence from Scripture that moral Goodneſs is the *principal* Part of Religion, is, that at the great *Account* between God and us, his main *Inquiſition* will be concerning ſuch Actions as are *morally* good or evil, For ſo *Rom.* 2. 6. we are told that God will *render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in welldoing, ſeek for honour and glory and immortality, eternal life. But to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguiſh.* And accordingly *Enoch* as he is quoted by St. *Jude* verſes 14. 15. declares this to be the Occaſion of the Lords coming with thouſands of his Saints, *viz. to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard ſpeeches which ungodly ſinners have ſpoken againſt*

againſt him; all which are matters of Fact againſt the eternal Rules of Morality. And our Saviour himſelf in that Popular *Scheme* and *Deſcription* he gives of the Proceedings of the *Day of Judgment*, plainly declares that one of the principal Matters, he will then inquire into, will be our *Neglect* or *Obſervance* of that great moral Duty of *Charity* towards the poor and needy, *Mat.* 25. 32, 46. Which is a plain Evidence that our *obeying* or *diſobeying* the eternal Laws of Morality, is that by which we do moſt *pleaſe* or *diſpleaſe* God; ſince 'tis upon this that he will moſt inſiſt in his final *Arbitration* of our eternal Fate. For ſince his laſt Judgment is only the *final Execution* of his Laws, we may be ſure that whatſoever it is that he will *principally* inſiſt on in his *Judgment*, that is the *principal* matter of his *Laws*. And now having ſufficiently proved the *Truth* of the Propoſition, I proceed to the *Reaſons* of it; upon what *Accounts* it is that God hath made moral Goodneſs the main and principal Part of our Religion. The chief Reaſons of which are theſe four.

Firſt, BECAUSE 'tis by moral Goodneſs that we do moſt *honor* him.

Secondly, BECAUSE 'tis by this that we do moſt *imitate* him.

Thirdly, BECAUSE 'tis by this that we advance to *our own* Happineſs.

Fourthly, WHEN all our *poſitive* Duty is ceaſt, *this* is to be the *eternal* Work and Buſineſs of our Nature.

I. GOD hath made moral Goodneſs the *principal* Part of our Religion, becauſe 'tis by this that we do him the greateſt *Honour*. It is an excellent ſaying of *Hierocles* τιμὴν ποιεῖται τοῦ ἀνενδεοῦς ἡ τῶν ὑπ' ἐκείνου προτεινομένων ἀγαθῶν ὑποδοχή: οὐ γὰρ τιμήσεις τὸν θεὸν δίδους τι αὐτῷ ἀλλ' ἄξιος τοῦ λαβεῖν τὰ παρ' ἐκείνου γινόμενος, i.e. *the beſt honour we can do to a ſelf-ſufficient being is to receive the good things he holds forth unto us; and therefore 'tis not by giving to God that you honour him, but by rendring your ſelves worthy to receive of him*; for, ſaith he, ὅστις τιμᾷ τὸν θεὸν ὡς προσδεόμενον, οὗτος λέληθεν οἰόμενος ἑαυτὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι κρείττονα, i. e. *whoſoever gives honour to God as to one that wants, doth not conſider thathe thereby ſets himſelf above God*. For by his own *ſelf-ſufficiency* he is infinitely removed above all Capacity of *Want*, and ſo can never need any additional *Contributions* of Glory and Happineſs from his Creatures. For *Glory* being nothing elſe but the *Reſplendency* of Perfection, which always *reflects* its own Beams

Beams upon it ſelf, where ever there is *infinite* perfection (as to be ſure there is in the Nature of God) there muſt an *infinite* Glory proceed from it; and therefore being infinitely glorious in *himſelf*, it is impoſſible that any thing we do ſhould add any *further* Glory to him. So that if we would truly *honour* and *glorify* him, it muſt not be by *giving* to, but by *receiving* from him. Now the beſt thing we can receive from God, is *Himſelf*; and Himſelf we *do* receive in our ſtrict *compliance* with the eternal Laws of Goodneſs. Which *Laws* being *tranſcribed* from the *Nature* of God, from his own *eternal* Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs, we do by *obeying* them, derive *Gods* Nature into *ours*. So that while we write after the *Copie* of his Laws, we write out the *Perfections* of his *Being*; and his Laws being the *Seal* upon which he hath *ingraven* his Nature, we do in obeying them take *Impreſſion* from him and *ſtamp* his bleſſed Nature on our own. For all thoſe virtuous Diſpoſitions of mind which we acquire by the Practice of Virtue, are ſo many genuine *Signatures* of God, taken from the *Seal* of his *Law*, and *Participations* of his *Nature*. For ſo Holineſs which conſiſts in a *Conformity* of Soul with the eternal Laws of Goodneſs, is in Scripture

pture called the *Signature or impression of the Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of Redemption, Eph.* 4. 30. and such as *do righteousness*, are said to *be born of God*, 1 *John* 2. 29. which implies their *deriving* from him who is their *divine* Parent, a *divine* and *Godlike* Nature, even as Children do their *humane* Nature from their *humane* Parents. So that by the Practice of moral Goodness we receive from God the *best* thing he can bestow, *viz.* a *divine* and *Godlike* Nature; and consequently by so doing, we render him the *highest* Honour and Glory. For since we can no *otherwise* honout him but by *receiving* from him, we doubtless do him the *greatest* honour when we receive *Himself*, by *partaking* of the Perfections of *his* Nature, which are the geatest Gift he can communicate to us. *Herein*, saith our Saviour, *is my Father Glorified, that ye bear much fruit, John* 15. 8. μόνος γὰρ οἶδε κμᾶν ὁ προηγουμένως ἱερεῖον ἑαυτὸν προσάγων, saith the aforenamed Philosopher, *i. e.* he only knows how to honour God who presenrs *himself a Sacrifice* to him, *carves* his own Soul into a divine *Image*, and *composes* his Mind into a *Temple* for the Entertainment of God, and the Reception of the divine Light and Glory. 'Tis then therefore that

we

we beſt *honour* God, when by the Practice of true Godlineſs we *conform* our Wills and Affections to him; and *derive* into our ſelves *his* Nature and Perfections; and ſhould you erect to him a Temple more magnificent than *Solomons*, and load its Altars with *Hecatombs* of Sacrifices, and make it perpetually ring with *Pſalms* and reſounding *Choirs* of *Halelujahs*, it would not be comparably ſo *great* an Honour to him, as to convert your own Souls into *living* Temples, and make them the *Habitations* of his Glory and Perfections. For he *values* no Sacrifice like that of an *obedient* Will, *delights* in no Choir like that of *pure* and *heavenly* Affections, nor hath he in all his Creation an Enſign of Honour ſo truly *worthy* of him, as that of a *divine* and *God-like* Soul; a Soul that *reflects* his Image, and *ſhines back* his own Glory upon him. Wherefore ſince 'tis by the Practice of moral Goodneſs that we *receive* God, and *copie* his Nature into our own, it is no wonder he ſhould make it the *principal* Part of our Duty. For how can it be otherwiſe expected but that he ſhould exact that *chiefly* of us, which *moſt* conduces to his own glory. Since then nothing we can do can conduce to his Glory but only our *receiving* Benefits

Benefits from him, and ſince no Benefit we receive from him can ſo *much* conduce to it as our receiving *Himſelf*, and ſince we can no *otherwiſe* receive himſelf but by *practiſing* that Goodneſs which is the Perfection of his Nature, we muſt *hereby* doubtleſs render him the greateſt Honour and Glory.

II. GOD hath made moral Goodneſs the *principal* Part of our Duty, becauſe 'tis by this that we do moſt truely *imitate* him. For ſo you find in Scripture, that wherever God is propoſed to us for a *Pattern* of Action it is by ſome Act or other of *Morality* that we are required to *tranſcribe* and *imitate* him. So 1 *Pet.* 1. 16. *be ye holy, for I am holy*; and *Luke* 6. 36. *be ye merciful as your Father is merciful*; and *Mat.* 5. 48. *be you perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect.* And indeed 'tis *only* in Moral Goodneſs that God *can* be the Pattern of our Imitation; as for thoſe Perfections of his which for Diſtinction-ſake we call *natural, viz.* his *Omniſcience*, and *Omnipreſence*, *Omnipotence* and *Eternity*, they are all beyond the *Sphere* of our Imitation, and therefore were never propoſed to us as the *Copies* of our Action. But as for his *moral* Perfections, *viz.* his *Goodneſs*, and *Righteouſneſs*, and *Purity*, and

and *Mercy*, they are the Fundamental *Rules* and *Standards* of all moral Action. For the Nature of God, as it is infinitely *good* and *righteous*, is the eternal *Fountain* whence all the Laws of Morality are derived; and all thoſe moral Precepts by which he governs his rational *Creation*, are only ſo many *Exemplifications* of the moral Perfections of his own Nature. For the *Holineſs* of God, which comprehends all his moral Perfections, conſiſts in that *eſſential Rectitude* of Nature, whereby he always *chooſes* and *acts* conformably to the Dictates of his own *infallible Reaſon*; and 'tis to this Rectitude of *chooſing* and *acting* that all his moral Laws do *oblige* us. For moral Laws are only the *Dictates* of *right Reaſon*, preſcribing us what to *do* and what to *avoid*; ſo that in our Complyance with them, we follow the Rule of Gods *own* Will and Actions, and thereby *imitate* the eternal Rectitude of *his* Nature. For tho in thoſe different *States* and *Relations* of God and Creature, *right Reaſon* cannot be ſuppoſed to oblige *him* and *us* to all the ſame *particular* Choices and Actions, yet it obliges us both to act *reaſonably* in our reſpective States and Relations; it obliges *God* to act *reaſonably* and as it becomes the State and Relation of

of a *God* and *Creator*; and it obliges *us* to act *reaſonably* and as it becomes the State and Relation of *men* and *Creatures*. And as for God, *He* is *invariably* inclined to do all that *right Reaſon* obliges him to, by the *eſſential Rectitude* of his own Nature; and herein conſiſts all his *moral Perfection*, which is nothing elſe but the *immutable* Inclination of his Nature to do whatever is *juſt* and *good* and *reaſonable*. So that while we live according to the *Dictates* of *Reaſon*, or, which is the ſame thing, the *eternal Laws* of Morality, we *trace* and *imitate* the moral Perfections of God; and in *our* Place and Station, live at the ſame Rate and by the ſame Rule, that *He* doth in *his*. We do what God himſelf *would* do, if he were in *our* Place, and what the Son of God *did* do when he was in our Nature; and there is no other Difference between *his* Life and *ours*, but what neceſſarily ariſes out of our different States and Relations. Since therefore Moral Goodneſs is an *Imitation* of God, 'tis no wonder that he ſo much prefers it *before* all other matter of Duty. For he muſt needs be ſuppoſed to love *that* above all things, which is the true *Copie* and *Image* of thoſe Perfections of his Nature, for the ſake of which he loves *Himſelf* above

above all. For he loves himſelf not merely becauſe he is *Himſelf*, but becauſe he is in all reſpects *morally Good*, and his *Will* and *Power* are perfectly compliant with the *infallible* Dictates of his own *Reaſon*; and hence ariſes his infinite *Complacency* in himſelf, that there is nothing in him but what his own Reaſon perfectly *approves*, no *Inclination* in his Will or Nature but what is exactly agreeable to the faireſt *Ideas* of his own Mind. And ſince it is for his own *Goodneſs-ſake* that he loves himſelf as he doth, we may be ſure that there is nothing *without* him can be ſo dear to him, as *that* in us which is the *Image* of his Goodneſs. Every like, we ſay, loves its like, and *the righteous Lord*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *loveth Righteouſneſs*, *Pſal.* 11.7. *i. e.* being righteous *himſelf*, he loves Righteouſneſs in *others* by an invincible *ſympathy* of Nature. His *greateſt* Heaven and Delight is in his own moſt righteous Nature; and *next to that* in righteous Souls that *imitate* and *reſemble* him. Ψυχῆς καθαρᾶς τόπον οἰκειότερον ἐπὶ γῆς θεὸς οὐκ ἔχει; *God hath not a more grateful Habitation upon Earth than in a pure and vertuous Mind*; εὐσεβεσιν δὲ βροτοῖς χαίρω τόσον ὁλύμπῳ ſaith *Apollo* that Mimick of God, by his *Pythian* Oracle. *i. e. I rejoyce as much*

much in pious Souls as in my own Heaven. Which is much what the ſame with that gracious Declaration that God himſelf makes by the Prophet *Iſaiah* 57. 15. *thus ſaith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe Name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* Since therefore moral Duties are all but ſo many *Copies* and *Exemplifications* of Gods Nature, this is a ſufficient Reaſon why he ſhould prefer them *before* all the *Poſitives* of Religion.

III. GOD *principally* requires moral Goodneſs, becauſe 'tis by the Practice of this that we advance to *our own* natural Happineſs. For the *natural* Happineſs of *reaſonable* Creatures, conſiſts in being entirely *governed* by right Reaſon; *i. e.* in having our *Minds* perfectly *informed* what it is that right Reaſon *requires* of us, and our *Wills* and *Affections* reduced to an entire *Conformity* thereunto. And this is the *Perfection* of moral Goodneſs, which conſiſts in behaving our ſelves towards *God* and *our ſelves* and all the *World* as right Reaſon *adviſes*, or as it *becomes* rational Creatures placed in our Circumſtances

ſtances and Relations. And when by practiſing all *that* true *Piety* and *Vertue* which moral Goodneſs implies, we are perfectly *accompliſhed* in our Behaviour towards God, our ſelves, and all the World, ſo as to render to each without any *Reſerve* or *Reluctancy* what is *fit* and *due* in the Judgment of *right* Reaſon, we are arrived to the moſt *happy* State that a reaſonable Nature can aſpire to. 'Tis true, in *this* Life we cannot be *perfectly* happy; and that not only becauſe we live in *wretched* Bodies that are continually liable to *Pain* and *Sickneſs*, but alſo becauſe we are imperfect *our ſelves*, and have none to converſe with but *imperfect* Creatures. But were we once ſtript of theſe *natural* and *moral* Imperfections, whereſoever we lived we ſhould *neceſſarily* be happy. Were I to live *all alone*, without this *painful* Body, I ſhould neceſſarily be in a *great* meaſure *happy* while I followed right Reaſon, tho I lived in the *darkeſt* Nook of the Creation. For *there* I ſhould ſtill *contemplate* God, and while I did ſo, my mind would be always *raviſh'd* with his Beauty and Perfections; *there* I ſhould moſt *ardently* love him, and while I did ſo, I ſhould *ſympathiſe* and *ſhare* with him in his Happineſs; *there* I ſhould ſtill *adore* and *praiſe*

him, and while I did ſo, I ſhould feel my ſelf continually *drawn up* to him, and *wrapt* into a real Injoyment of him; there I ſhould be *imitating* his Perfections, and while I did ſo, I ſhould enjoy an *unſpeakable Self-ſatisfaction*, perceiving how every Moment I grew a more *Divine* and *Godlike* Creature; there I ſhould intirely *reſign* up my ſelf to his heavenly *Will* and *Diſpoſal*, and while I did ſo, I ſhould be perpetually *exulting* under a joyous Aſſurance of his *Love* and *Favour*; in a word, there I ſhould firmly *depend* upon his *Truth* and *Goodneſs*, and while I did ſo, I ſhould be always *triumphing* in a *ſure* and *certain* Hope of a happy Being for ever. Thus were I ſhut up all *alone* in an *unbodied* State, and had none but *God* to converſe with, by behaving my ſelf towards *him* as right Reaſon directs me I ſhould *always*, enjoy him, and in that Injoyment ſhould be *always* Happy. And if while I thus behaved my ſelf towards *God*, I took care at the ſame time to demean my ſelf towards *my ſelf* with that exact *Prudence* and *Temperance* and *Fortitude* and *Humility* which right Reaſon requires, I ſhould hereby create another *Heaven* within me; a Heaven of *calm* Thoughts, *quiet* and *uniform* Deſires, *ſerene* and *placid* Affections, which

which would be ſo many *everflowing* Springs of *Pleaſure*, *Tranquillity* and *Contentment* within me. But if while I thus *enjoyed* God and my ſelf, by behaving my ſelf as right Reaſon directs, I might be admitted to *live* and *converſe* among perfect Spirits, and to *demean* my ſelf towards them with that exact *Charity* and *Juſtice* and *Peaceableneſs* and *Modeſty* which right Reaſon requires, the Wit of man could not conceive a true Pleaſure *beyond* what I ſhould *now* enjoy. For now I ſhould be poſſeſt of every thing my utmoſt *Wiſhes* could propoſe; of a *good* God, a *Godlike*, *joyful* and *contented* Soul, a *peaceable*, *kind* and *righteous* Neighbourhood; and ſo all *above*, *within*, and *without* me would be a *pure* and *perfect* Heaven. And indeed when I have *thrown off* this Body, and am *ſtript* into a naked Ghoſt, the *only* or at leaſt the *greateſt* goods my Nature will be capable of enjoying, are *God*, *my ſelf*, and *bleſſed Spirits*; and theſe are no otherwiſe *injoyable*, but only by Acts of Piety and Vertue, without which there is no good thing beyond the Grave that a Soul can *taſt* or *reliſh*. So that if, when I go to ſeek my Fortune in the *World of Spirits*, God ſhould *thus* beſpeak me, "O man, "now thou art *leaving* all theſe Injoyments

" of *Sence*, conſult with thy ſelf what will " do thee *good*, and thou ſhalt have what- " ſoever thou wilt ask to carry with thee " into that *ſpiritual* State; I am ſure the utmoſt I ſhould crave would be *this*, "Lord " give me a heart *inflamed* with Love, and " *winged* with Duty to thee, that thereby " I may but enjoy *thee*; give me a *ſober* " and a *temperate* mind, that thereby I may " but enjoy *my ſelf*; give me a *kind*, a " *peaceable*, and a *righteous* Temper, that " thereby I may but enjoy the ſweet Socie- " ty of *bleſſed* Spirits; O give me but *theſe* " bleſſed things, and thou haſt *crowned* all " my wiſhes, and to Eternity I will never " crave any other Favour for my ſelf but " only *this*, that I may *continue* a pious " and a vertuous Soul for ever; for while " I continue *ſo*, I am ſure I ſhall enjoy all " *ſpiritual* Good, and be as happy as *Hea-* " *ven* can make me. So that the *main* Happineſs you ſee of Humane Nature conſiſts in the *Perfection* of moral Good- neſs; and it being ſo, it is no wonder that the good God who above all things *deſires* the Happineſs of his Creatures, ſhould above all things *exact* of us the Duties of Morality. He knows that our *ſupreme* Beatitude is founded in our *Piety* and *Ver- tue*, and that out of our *free* and *conſtant*, *ſprightly*

ſprightly and *vivacious* Exerciſe of *theſe* ariſes all our Heaven both *here* and *hereafter*; and knowing this, that *tender* Love which he bears us, that *mighty* Concern which he hath for our Welfare makes him thus *urgent* and *importunate* with us. For he regards our *Duty* no farther than it tends to our *Good*, and values each Act of our *Obedience* by what it contributes to our *Happineſs*; and 'tis therefore that he prefers *moral* Duties above *poſitive*, becauſe they are more *eſſential* to our eternal Welfare.

IV. and Laſtly, GOD *principally* requires of us moral Goodneſs, becauſe when all *poſitive* Duty is ceaſt, *this* is to be the *eternal* Work and Exerciſe of our Natures. For Moral Good is *from everlaſting to everlaſting*, its Birth was *elder* than the World, and its Life and Duration runs *parallel* with Eternity; before ever *the Mountains were brought forth* 'twas founded in the Nature of God, and as an inſeparable *Beam* of his all-comprehending Reaſon it *ſhines* from one end of the World to the other. For as ſoon as ever there was a rational Creature *in being*, the obligations of Morality *laid hold* on him, before ever any *poſitive* Duty was *impoſed*; and as long as ever there *remains* a rational Creature, the Obligations of Morality will *abide* on

him, when all positive Duty is *expired*. For *moral* Obligations are not founded like *positive* ones upon *mutable* Circumstances, but upon firm and *everlasting* Reasons; upon Reasons that to all *Eternity* will carry with them the *same* force and necessity. For as long as we are the Creatures of an *infinitely perfect* Creator, 'twill be as much our Duty as 'tis now, to *love* and *adore* him; as long as we are *reasonable* Creatures, 'twill be as much our Duty as 'tis now, to submit our *Will* and *Affections* to our *Reason*, and as long as we are *related* to *other* reasonable Creatures, 'twill be as much our Duty as 'tis now, to be *kind* and *just* and *peaceable* in all our Intercourses with them. So that these are such Duties as no Will can *dispense* with, no Reasons *abrogate*, no Circumstances *disanul* or *make void*; but as long as God is what he *is*, and we are what we *are*, they *must* and *will* oblige us. So that what the Psalmist saith of God, may be truly applied to moral Goodness, *the Heavens shall perish, but thou shalt remain, they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and be folded up and Changed, but thou art the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, and thy years shall have no end.* But as *long since* the *positive* Parts of the *Jewish* Religion were *cancell'd* and *repealed*, the Vail

of

of the Temple *rent in twain*, the Temple it ſelf *buried* in Ruins and all its Altars *thrown down* and their Sacrifices *aboliſhed*, whilſt the moral Parts of that Religion ſtill ſtand *firm* as the everlaſting Mountains about *Jeruſalem*; ſo the time will come when the *poſitive* Parts of *Chriſtianity* it ſelf muſt *ceaſe*, when Faith muſt be *ſwallowed up* in Viſion, and Sacraments be *made void* by Perfection, and all the ſtated times and outward Solemnities of our Worſhip *expire* into an everlaſting Sabbath; but then when all this *Scene* of things is quite *vaniſhed* away, Piety and Virtue will ſtill keep the *Stage*, and be the everlaſting *Exerciſe* of our glorified Natures. For as I ſhewed before, all *poſitive* Duty is inſtituted in ſubſerviency to *moral*, and like a Scaffold to a Houſe is only erected for the *Convenience* of Building up this everlaſting Structure of Morality; and when this is once *finiſhed*, muſt be all taken down again as an unneceſſary *Incumbrance* that now only *hides* and *obſcures* the Beauty of that Heavenly Building that was raiſed *on* it, and ſhall abide *without* it for ever, to entertain our Faculties through all the future Ages of our Being, and to be the everlaſting Manſion of our Natures. Wherefore ſince poſitive Duties muſt all

cease and *expire*, and only moral Goodneſs is to be our Buſineſs *for ever*, 'tis no wonder that God, who is ſo good a *Maſter*, takes ſo much Care in ths ſhort *Apprentiſhip* of our Life to train us up in that which is to be our *Trade* for ever. He knows it is upon Piety and Vertue that we muſt *live* to Eternity, and *maintain* our ſelves in all our Glory and Happineſs; and that if when we come into the inviſible World we have not this bleſſed Trade to *ſubſiſt by*, we are *undone* for ever; and therefore out of a tender Regard to our Welfare, he makes it his *principal* Care to *train* us up in this everlaſting *Buſineſs* of our Natures.

WHAT then remains but that *above* all things we take care to apply our ſelves to the Practice of *moral* Goodneſs: to *contemplate* and *love* and *adore* and *imitate* God; to *depend* upon him and *reſign* up our ſelves to his Diſpoſal and Government; to be *ſober* and *temperate* in our Affections and Appetites, and *juſt* and *Charitable* and *modeſt* and *peaceable* towards one another. Theſe are the *great* things which God requires at our hands, and without *theſe* all our Religion is a fulſome Cheat. 'Tis true the *poſitive* Parts of Religion are our Duty as well as theſe, and

and God by his Sovereign Authority *exacts* them at our hands; and unleſs when Jeſus Chriſt hath been ſufficiently propoſed to us we do ſincerely *believe* in him, unleſs we ſtrike Covenant with him by *Baptiſm*, and frequently renew that Covenant in the *Lords Supper*; unleſs we diligently attend on the *Publick Aſſemblies* of his Worſhip, and uſe an honeſt Care to avoid *Schiſm* and to perſiſt in *Unity* with his true Catholick Church, there is no Pretence of Morality will bear us out when we appear before his dread Tribunal. But then we are to conſider that the proper Uſe of all theſe *poſitive* Duties is to *improve* and *perfect* us in *moral* Goodneſs; and unleſs we uſe them to *this* Effect we ſhall render them altogether *void* and *inſignificant*. Wherefore as we would not loſe all the *Fruits* of our poſitive Duties, let us take care to extend them to their utmoſt *Deſign*, to improve our *Sacrifice* to *Obedience*, our *Sacraments* to *Gratitude* and *Love*, our *Hearing* to *Practice*, our *Praying* to *Devotion*, and our *Faſting* to *Humility* and *Repentance*. For if we reſt in *theſe* Duties and go no farther, thinking by ſuch ſhort Payments to *Compound* with God for all thoſe Debts we owe to the eternal Laws of

of Morality, we miſerably *cheat* and *befool* our own Souls, which notwithſtanding all this Exactneſs about the *Poſitives* of Religion are by their own *immoral* Affections ſtill enſlaved to the Devil; to whom it is much one what our outward *Form* of Religion is, whether it be *Chriſtian* or *Heathen* or *Mahometan*, provided it doth not *operate* on our minds or give any *Check* to the Current of our depraved Natures. For whether we bow to *God* or to an *Idol*, is all one to the Devil, ſo long as our ſouls remain *Profane* and *indevout*; whether we Communicate in the holy *Sacrament* of Chriſt's Death, or in the impure Rights of *Venus* and *Priapus*, is indifferent to him ſo long as our Hearts continue *putrid* and *corrupt*, ſteaming with *unchaſt* Deſires and Affections; whether we Celebrate the Chriſtian *Feſtivals* or the bloody *Saturnals* or Barbarous *Bacchanalia* is no great matter to him, provided our Minds be but canker'd with *Wrath* and *Malice* and *Cruelty* and *Revenge*. Theſe are the *Sinews* of his Goverment, and the *Bands* of our Allegiance to his Throne; and whilſt *they* are preſerved, he knows his Kingdom is *ſafe*, and ſo long he doth not much regard what our *outward* Religion is. Nay there is nothing can be a higher Gratification to his

his Ambition, than to behold *Himſelf* ſerved in Chriſts own *Livery* and Worſhip'd in a *Form of Godlineſs*; by which he hath the Pleaſure of *dividing* Empires with God, and *raviſhing* the better ſhare from him; of beholding his hated Creator *mockt* with the Shell and Outſide of a Worſhiper, whilſt himſelf is *treated* with the Kernel and Inſide. For whilſt we continue *wicked* under an outward *Form* of Religion, we do in Effect Sacrifice our *Beaſt* to God, and *our ſelves* to the Devil; who above all things loves thoſe unnatural Commixtures of *Hearer* and *Slanderer*, *Worſhiper* and *Deceiver*, *Communicant* and *Drunkard*, *Sacrificer* and *Oppreſſor*; by which we only *exalt* and *ſublimate* Impiety, which never looks ſo Glorious as when 'tis *Gilded* with Faſts and long Prayers. Wherefore as you will anſwer it at your eternal Peril, do not *Cheat* and *abuſe* your ſelves with the *Name* and *Shadow* of Religion; leſt when you have *ſuperſtructed* your Hopes of Happineſs on a *rotten* Foundation, it ſhould finally *miſcarry* and *ſink* underneath you into everlaſting Wretchedneſs and Deſpair.

CHAP. II.

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Concerning Religion; What it is, and what things are Neceſſary for the founding *and* ſecuring *its Obligations.*

HAVING in the foregoing Chapter briefly diſcourſed concerning the *Nature* of Moral Goodneſs, and ſhewn that it is the *principal* Part of Religion, it will be requiſite in the next place to *explain* what Religion is, that ſo from thence we may collect what things are neceſſary to the *founding* and *ſecuring* its Obligations, which will be the Subject of the enſuing Chapters.

RELIGION in the General reſpects *God* as the *Object* and *Centre* of all its Acts and Offices. For upon Suppoſition that there is ſuch a Being as a *God*, and that there are ſuch Beings as *reaſonable Creatures*, or *capable Subjects* of Religion, it will neceſſarily follow that there muſt be ſome *Religion* or other to tie and oblige *theſe* Creatures to *that* God. For by God we mean a Being that hath all *poſſible Perfection*

fection in him, and is the ſupreme *Cauſe* and *Fountain* of all other Being and Perfection; and ſuch a Being we muſt needs acknowledge doth not only *deſerve* the worthieſt Acts of Religion that *reaſonable* Creatures, who alone are capable of underſtanding his *Worth*, can render to him, but hath alſo an unalienable Right to *exact* and *require* them; and that not only upon the Account of his own eſſential *Deſert* (for whatever he *deſerves* he hath a right to *demand*) but alſo upon Account of the *Right* he hath to reaſonable Creatures, who owe their *Beings* to him and all their *Capacities* of ſerving him, and ſo cannot diſpoſe of themſelves without manifeſt Injury to him *contrary* to his Will and Orders. By *reaſonable Creatures* we mean Beings that are *derived* from God and are *indowed* by him with a Capacity of underſtanding *him* and *themſelves*; and ſuch Creatures muſt neceſſarily ſtand *obliged* to render him ſuch Acts as are *ſutable* to and *due* Acknowledgments of the *Perfections* of his Nature and their own *Dependence* upon him; and this *Obligation* is that which we call *Religion*. Which word according to *Lactantius lib.* 4. *Divin. Inſtitut. c.* 28. is derived a *religando*, from *binding* or *obliging* us to God.

God. So that *true Religion in the general is the Obligation of Reaſonable Creatures to render ſuch Acts of Worſhip to God as are ſutable to the Excellency of his Nature and their Dependence upon him.* Which Definition includes both the *Doctrines* and *Duties* of Religion. For the Doctrines are the *Reaſons* by which it obliges us to the Duties; and as there is no Duty in Religion but what derives its *Tie* and *Obligation* from ſome Doctrine *contained* in it, ſo there is no Doctrine in Religion but what *ties* and *obliges* us to ſome Duty that is *enjoyned* in it. When therefore I call Religion an *Obligation*, I include in that term all thoſe *Doctrines* of it concerning *God*, his *Nature*, and his *tranſactions* with his Creatures, which are the *reaſons* by which we ſtand obliged to render all acts of Worſhip to him. But for the better underſtanding of the nature of true Religion, it is neceſſary we ſhould diſtinguiſh it into *natural* and *revealed*. By *natural* Religion I mean *the Obligation which natural Reaſon lays upon us to render to God all that Worſhip and Obedience which upon the conſideration of his Nature and our dependence upon him it diſcovers to be due to him.* For God having planted in us a *rational* Faculty, by the due *exerciſe* of which we are naturally

turally lead into the belief of his *Being*, the ſenſe of his *Perfections* and the acknowledgment of his *Providence*, he expects we ſhould follow it as the *Guide* and *Directory* of our lives and actions; and whatſoever this Faculty doth *naturally* and in its *due* exerciſe dictate to us, is as much the *voice of God* as any *revelation*. For whatever it *naturally* dictates, it muſt dictate by *his* direction who is the Author of its Nature, and who having framed it to ſpeak *ſuch* a ſenſe and pronounce *ſuch* a judgment of things, hath thereby put *his* word into its mouth and doth *himſelf* ſpeak through it as through a ſtanding *Oracle* which he hath erected in our breaſts on purpoſe to *convey* and *deliver* his own Mind and Will to us. So that whatſoever natural *Reaſon* rightly exerciſed teaches us concerning God and our Duty towards him, is true *Religion*, and doth as effectually *bind* and *oblige* us to him as if it had been immediately *revealed* by him. It teaches us that God is infinitely *wiſe* and *juſt* and *powerful* and *good*; that he is the *Fountain* of our Beings, the *diſpoſer* of our Affairs, and the *Arbitrator* of our Fate both here and hereafter; and by theſe Doctrines it obliges us to *admire* and *adore* him, to *fear* and *love* him, to *truſt* and *obey* him. And this

is

is *natural Religion*, which conſiſts of ſuch Doctines as natural *Reaſon* teaches us concerning *God* and his *Nature* and *Providence*, and of ſuch Duties as it *infers* from thoſe Doctrines and *inforces* by them; and all the Doctrines of this Religion upon which it founds its Duties, being *eternal verities*, as they muſt neceſſarily be being all deduced from the *immutable* Natures of God and things, all the Duties of it muſt be *morally*, that is *eternally* good and reaſonable, becauſe thoſe Doctrines are the *eternal* Reaſons upon which they are *founded* and by which they *oblige*. So that whatſoever is a Duty of *natural* Religion muſt oblige *for ever*, becauſe it obliges by an *eternal* Reaſon, and ſo can never be *diſpenſed* with or *abrogated* 'till the Natures of things are *cancell'd* and *reverſed*, and eternal *Truths* are converted into *Lies*.

IN ſhort therefore, *natural* Religion hath only *natural* Reaſon for its *rule* and *meaſure*; which from the Nature of God and things deduces all thoſe *eternal* Reaſons by which it *diſtinguiſhes* our Actions into *honeſt* and *diſhoneſt*, *decorous* and *filthy*, *good* and *evil*, *neceſſary* and *ſinful*. For it doth not *make* them good or evil by *judging* them ſo, but if it judgeth *truly*, it judges of them as it *finds* them; and unleſs it finds them

them good or evil *in themſelves* upon ſome *eternal* Reaſon *for* or *againſt* them, its judgment is *falſe* and *erroneous*. So that the *objective* goodneſs or evil that is in the actions themſelves is the meaſure of our *Natural Reaſon*, but our natural Reaſon judging *truly* concerning them is the meaſure of our *choice* or *refuſal* of them; for be our action never ſo good or evil in *it ſelf*, unleſs we have ſome *eternal* reaſon *for* or *againſt* it, we cannot *judge* it ſo; and unleſs we judge it ſo, we cannot reaſonable *chooſe* or *refuſe* it; but as ſoon as ever we have *judged* and *pronounced* it good or evil upon an *eternal* reaſon, we ſtand obliged by that Judgment to do or forbear it. So that right Reaſon pronouncing ſuch actions good and ſuch evil, is the *Law* of Nature, and thoſe eternal Reaſons upon which it ſo pronounces them are the *Creed* of Nature, both which together make *natural Religion*. And by *this* Religion was the World Governed, at leaſt the greateſt part of it., for ſome thouſands of Years; till by *long* and *ſad* Experience it was found too *weak* to *correct* the errors of mens *Minds*, and *reſtrain* the wild extravagancies of their *Wills* and *Affections*; and then God out of his great pity to *loſt* and *degenerate* Mankind, vouchſafed to us

the glorious Light of *revealed* Religion, which in the *largeſt* acceptation of it includes all *natural* Religion, as well the *credenda* as *agenda*, the Doctrines as the Duties of it; both which are contained in that *Revelation* of his Will which God hath made to the World, to which it hath ſuperadded ſundry Doctrines and Duties of *ſupernatural* Religion.

BUT *ſtrictly* ſpeaking, *revealed* Religion as it is diſtinguiſhed from *natural*, conſiſts of ſuch Doctrines and Duties as are knowable and diſcoverable *only* by *Revelation*; as are not to be *deduced* and *inferred* by reaſoning and Diſcourſe from any neceſſary or natural Principles, but wholly depend upon the *counſel* and *good Will* of God. And where things depend intirely upon Gods *Will*, and their Being or not Being lies wholly in his *free diſpoſal*, it is impoſſible that our natural Reaſon ſhould ever arrive at the knowledge of them without ſome *Revelation* of his Will concerning them. For in ſuch matters as theſe where the Will of God is abſolutely *free*, Reaſon without Revelation hath neither *neceſſary* nor *probable* Cauſes and Principles to argue from, and therefore can make neither *certain* Concluſions nor ſo much as *probable* gueſſes concerning them, but muſt neceſſarily

ſarily remain altogether in the dark till ſuch time as God hath *revealed* to it which way his Will is *determined*; and of ſuch matters as theſe conſiſts *all* revealed Religion *ſtrictly* ſo called. For tho God hath made *ſundry* Revelations of his Will, yet the *ſubject matter* of them was for the *Main* always the *ſame*, *viz.* the Doctrine of the *Mediation* of Jeſus Chriſt, and the Duties that are *ſubſequent* thereunto, which from that Promiſe which God made to *Adam* upon his Fall, *the ſeed of the Woman ſhall break the Serpents head*, to the laſt promulgation of the *Goſpel*, hath been the great *Theme* of all divine Revelation. For what elſe was that Revelation which God made to *Abraham*, *in thy Seed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed*, but only the *dawning* of the Goſpel? which is nothing but glad tidings of the *Mediator*. What was the Law of *Moſes* but only the ſame Goſpel *ſhining* through a *Cloud* of Types and *ſymbolical* Repreſentations; and what are all the ſucceeding *Propheſies* of the Old Teſtament but only the ſame Goſpel ſtill ſhining *clearer* and *clearer* till at laſt it broke forth in its *Meridian brightneſs*? And were this a proper place, I think I could eaſily demonſtrate that from *Adam* to *Moſes*, from *Moſes* to the *Prophets*, from

the *Prophets* to *Jesus Christ*, the main *Scope* and *Design* of all Divine Revelation, hath been the gradual *Discovery* of this great Mystery of the *Mediation*. So that revealed Religion was for the *matter* of it always the *same*, tho it was not always revealed with the same *Perspicuity*, but *clear'd up* by degrees from an obscure *Twilight* to a perfect *Day*. Wherefore *Christianity* which in strictness is nothing but the *Doctrine of the Mediation* together with its appendant *Duties*, ought not to be lookt on as a *new* Religion of 1600. years Date, for in reality 'tis as *ancient* as the *Fall*, and was *then* Preached to *Adam* in that *dark* and *Mysterious* Promise; after which it was a little *more* clearly repeated, tho very obscurely *still*, in God's Covenant with *Abraham*; and again, after that it was much more *amply* revealed in the *Types* and *Figures* of the Law of *Moses*, which yet like painted Glass in a Window did under their Pompous Shew still *darken* and *obscure* the holy Mysteries within them, which were nothing but the Doctrines and Laws of the Christian Religion. So that *Judaism* was only Christianity *vail'd*, and Christianity is only Judaism *revealed*.

THUS

THUS The Religion of the *Mediator*, you ſee, was the principal *Subject* of all divine *Revelation*; and this *without* Revelation natural Reaſon could never have *diſcovered*, becauſe the whole of it depended upon the *free will* of God. For whether he would admit of *any* Mediator or no; whether he would admit his *own Son* to be our Mediator or no; whether he would depoſit ſuch ineſtimable Bleſſings for us or no in the hands of our Mediator, was intirely left to his *free* Determination; and there was no *neceſſary* cauſe either *within* or *without* him, no nor any *probable* one neither, that humane Reaſon could ever have *diſcovered*, that could *incline* or *determine* him one way or t'other. So that till ſuch time as he *revealed* his Will to us, we were left utterly in the *dark* as to this matter, and had no manner of Principles to *argue* from, or ſo much as to *gueſs* by. This therefore is ſtrictly the *revealed* Religion as it ſtands in oppoſition to the *natural*. But ſince together with revealed Religion God hath put forth a *ſecond Edition* of natural, which was almoſt *loſt* and grown *out of Print* through the wretched Negligence and Stupidity of Mankind; and ſince he hath not only revealed them *together* but alſo incorporated

them into *one*; Religion as it is now framed and conſtituted by this happy *Conjunction* of natural with revealed, may be thus defined, *It is the Obligation of Rational Creatures to render ſuch acts of Worſhip to God through Jeſus Chriſt as he himſelf hath inſtituted, and as are in their own Natures ſutable to his Excellencies and their dependence upon him.* Where by *acts of Worſhip* I do not mean ſuch only as are *immediately* directed *to* and terminated *upon* God, as all thoſe are which are contained in the firſt Table of the Decalogue; but all thoſe acts *in general* which God hath *commanded*, which being performed upon a *Religious* account, that is, out of *Homage* and *Obedience* to Gods Will and Authority, are as *truly* and *properly* acts of Worſhip to him as *Prayer* or *Praiſe* or *Adjuration.*

AND now having given this ſhort account of the nature of Religion, it will from hence be eaſie to collect what *Principles* are neceſſary to the *founding* and *ſecuring* its Obligations; for

Firſt, GOD being the great *Object* of all Religion, it muſt be abſolutely neceſſary in order to our being truly Religious that we *believe* that God *is.*

Secondly,

Secondly, RELIGION being an *Obligation* of us to God; that this Obligation may take effect upon us, it is neceſſary we ſhould believe that he *concerns* himſelf about us, and conſequently that he *Governs* the World by his *Providence*.

Thirdly, RELIGION obliging us to render all due *acts of Worſhip* to him, to *inforce* this Obligation upon us, it is neceſſary we ſhould believe that he will certainly *reward* us if we *render* thoſe acts to him, and as certainly *puniſh* us if we do *not*.

Fourthly, THESE acts of Worſhip which Religion obliges us to, being ſuch as are *ſuitable* to the Excellency of Gods Nature, to enable us to *fulfil* this Obligation it is neceſſary we ſhould have *right Apprehenſions* of the Nature of God.

Fifthly, RELIGION obliging us to render all theſe Acts of Worſhip to God *in* and *through* Jeſus Chriſt, to our performing this it is neceſſary we ſhould believe in his *Mediation*.

THESE are the great *Principles* in which all the Obligations of Religion are *founded*; and therefore in order to the through *fixing* thoſe *Obligations* upon mens Minds, it will be neceſſary before we proceed to the particular Duties which Religion obliges us to, to diſcourſe of theſe Principles diſtinctly.

CHAP. III.

CHAP. III.

Of the neceſſity of believing that God is, in order to Mens being truly Religious.

HE *that cometh unto God*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *muſt believe that God is*, *Heb.* 11. 6. where by *coming to God* is meant *worſhiping* him, that is, expreſſing our *Veneration* of, and *Affection* to him, by outward and viſible *Signs* and *Actions*; and unleſs our *outward* Actions in Religion proceed from an *inward* Veneration of, and Affection to him, they are not *Worſhip* but *Mockery*; but how is it poſſible a man ſhould inwardly *venerate* God, when he *believes* there is *no* ſuch Being in the World? For how *real* ſoever any thing may be *in it ſelf*, if we *believe* it *is* not, it is to us as if it *were* not; and therefore tho God doth ſo *neceſſarily* exiſt, as that he cannot *but* be, the very Notion of him implying an *infinite* Diſtance from *not being*; yet while we *believe* he *is* not, our Thoughts can be no more concern'd about him, than about purchaſing an Inheritance in *Utopia*. So that this Propoſition that *God is*, is the *prime Fundamental* of all Religion, and if this

this be *removed*, Religion muſt *ſink*, and all its Sacred Obligations *fly in ſunder*. But this is ſo *ſelf-evident* that it would be very impertinent to *inſiſt* upon the Proof of it. All that I ſhall do therefore in purſuance of this Argument ſhall be to endeavour to eſtabliſh the *Belief* of this *fundamental* Truth upon which all Religion depends; and that Firſt, by inquiring into, and removing the *Cauſes* of mens *Infidelity* in this matter; Secondly, by repreſenting the *Folly* and *Unreaſonableneſs* of it. For as for the *Proofs* and *Evidences* of Gods *Being*, I ſhall reſerve them till I come to diſcourſe of his *Providence*, where I think there is enough ſaid to ſatisfie any Man that is not deſperately hardned againſt all Conviction.

SECT. I.

SECT. I.

Of the Cauſes *of Atheiſm; ſhewing the great* Abſurdity *and* Unreaſonableneſs *of them.*

CONSIDERING how loudly the Voice of *Nature*, the Conſent of *Nations*, and the beautiful *Structure* and *Contrivance* of things do proclaim the Being of God, one would think it impoſſible there ſhould be any ſuch Monſter as an *Atheiſt* among *reaſonable* Beings; and indeed it hath been *warmly* diſputed among the Learned whether there *be* any ſuch or *no?* A Queſtion, which theſe later Ages have determined in the *Affirmative*, by an *Induction* of too many woful Inſtances. But doubtleſs had men impartially attended to the *Dictates* of *Reaſon*, and not delivered themſelves up to the *Infatuations* of their *Luſts*, and the inveterate *Prejudice* of a corrupt *Imagination*, it would have been impoſſible for ſo many groſs *Abſurdities* as Atheiſm implies, to have entred into their minds; but when once mens *Wills* and *Affections* have eſpouſed a Propoſition, they

they will make one ſhift or other, be it never ſo abſurd, to impoſe it on their *Underſtandings*; and conſidering how many *Cauſes* there are leading men to Atheiſm who are *prediſpoſed* thereunto, I cannot think an *Atheiſt* to be ſo great a *Wonder*. For ſo long as mens *Underſtandings* are led by their *Wills*, and their Wills are *byaſſed* with inclinations to Impiety, they can hardly forbear *wiſhing* there *were* no God; and then from wiſhing there were none to *believing* there *is* none, will be a very ſhort and eaſie Tranſition. Since therefore their Atheiſm proceeds not ſo much from the Defect of their *Reaſon* as from the fault of their *Wills*, perhaps the moſt effectual way to cure it, is rather to *detect* and *remove* thoſe faulty Cauſes in their *Wills*, than to attempt upon their *Reaſon* with the *Proofs* and *Demonſtrations* of a Deity. And accordingly you ſee that when God had once *erected* this goodly *Theatre* of Beings, and *imprinted* on it ſo many glorious *Characters* of his own *Power*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*, tho from time to time he hath wrought *innumerable* Miracles, to reduce men from *Superſtition*, *Idolatry* and *Wickedneſs*, yet he never wrought *one* to reduce them from *Atheiſm*. And indeed to what purpoſe

ſhould

ſhould he? it being highly improbable that they who will not be convinc'd of the Being of God by this *ſtanding* Miracle, the *World*, in which there are ſo many ample *Demonſtrations* of his Being, ſhould be convinc'd of it by any *other* Miracles; for other Miracles are only the *Diſorders* and *Interruptions* of Nature; and certainly the regular *Courſe* and ſtanding *Order* of Nature, is a much more glorious Evidence of Gods *Wiſdom* and *Power*, than the moſt miraculous *Interruptions* and *Diſorders* of it. And therefore if men will be Atheiſts notwithſtanding God hath imprinted ſo many *Proofs* of his Being on this viſible Creation, 'tis plain it is not their *Reaſon* but their *Wills* that make them ſo; and if ſo, to what purpoſe is it to urge their Reaſon with the *Arguments* of Gods Being? ſince if they will not liſten to thoſe that are round about them, and are every where to be found in this great *Volume* of Nature, it is highly improbable that even *Miracles* themſelves, which are *Gods* peculiar *Arguments* (and are therefore called *the Demonſtrations of his Spirit*) ſhould ever be able to perſwade them. Wherefore to put a ſtop to this *Peſtilential* Diſeaſe, which in theſe later Ages hath been ſo *fatally* propagated among

mong all Degrees and Orders of men, I conceive the moſt proper way is to *diſcover* and *remove* thoſe faults in their *Wills* which have ſuch a malevolent Influence on their *Underſtandings*; and the principal ones may be reduced to theſe nine Heads,

1. A perverſe *Oppoſition* of Will to the Will and Nature of God.

2. Superſtitious *Miſapprehenſions* concerning God.

3. Precipitant *Raſhneſs* in *preſcribing* to, and *prejudging* the Divine Providence.

4. Vain Affectation of *Singularity* in Opinion.

5. Cuſtom of *Drolling on*, and *Ridiculing* the moſt ſerious things.

6. Taking up our Religion, or Opinions in Religion, without *Examination*.

7. Meaſuring the *Truth* or *Falſhood* of Religion by the *Practice* of ſuch as make high *Pretences* to it.

8. Placing Religion in the little *Opinions* that conſtitute the *Sects* and *Parties* we are engaged in.

9. Profane and careleſs *Neglect* of *Publick Worſhip*.

I. ONE great cauſe of Atheiſm is the perverſe *Oppoſition* of mens Wills to the Will and Nature of God. For the natural Notion which men have of God is, that he is a moſt *pure* and *holy* Being, infinitely removed by the Perfections of his Nature from all *Inclinations* that are *contrary* to the Dictates of *right Reaſon*. And accordingly in all thoſe *Declarations* which he hath made of his Will, they find him expreſſing an high *Deteſtation* of all Immorality and Wickedneſs, and commanding them to abſtain from it under the moſt dreadful *Penalties*, which they know he hath both *Right* and *Power* to inflict when he pleaſes. Notwithſtanding which, preſuming on his *Goodneſs* and a *future Repentance*, they ſuffer themſelves to be *tempted* and *ſeduced* into wickedneſs; the pleaſure of which *tolls* them on from one Wickedneſs to another, till their Wills are *captivated* by Cuſtom to inveterate *Habits* of Sinning. So that *now* their *Senſe* of God, and of his Almighty Diſpleaſure being no longer able to *maſter* the ſtubbornneſs of their Wills, only ſerves to *fret* and *diſturb* them, to raiſe *Terrors* and *Anxieties* in their Conſciences, and therewithal to *imbitter* the Pleaſure of their Sin. For ſo long as this *Senſe* remains alive in their

their Boſoms, they can never hope to ſin *quietly* for it; and it being ſo, they have no other Remedy but either to part with *that* or their *Sins*. For while they *retain* their Sins, the Belief of a God will grow an intolerable *Vexation* to them, unleſs by *ſophiſticating* their Belief with falſe Notions of Religion they can *temper* it into an *amicable* Compliance with their Luſts. And this is uſually the Artifice of the *duller* ſort of People whoſe Underſtandings are more *eaſily* impoſed on, *viz.* to intermingle with their Belief of a God ſuch Notions of Religion as may render it *favourable* and *propitious* to their Luſts. And hence I doubt not ſprang moſt of thoſe *wicked* Doctrines which from time to time have been *foiſted* into Chriſtianity, from the Deſire which men have to *accommodate* the Difference between their Conſciences and their wicked Wills, and reconcile their natural *ſenſe* of God to their Sins. But alas theſe Artifices are all ſo *thin* and *tranſparent*, that 'tis a hard matter for men of Wit to *impoſe* them on their Underſtandings; and tho they have an equal *Good-will* to theſe wicked Doctrines with the duller ſort of ſinners, yet their Reaſon is too ſharp-ſighted to be *Choue'd* and *deceived* by them. And therefore

fore usually they go another way to work, and being sensible that they can never enjoy their sins in *quiet*, while they are awed with the *Sense* and *Belief* of a Deity, and yet obstinately resolved that they *will* enjoy them, they have no other Expedient but to muster up all their Wit and Reason to dispute the belief of a God out of their Minds; and being *stifly* resolved to persist in their Wickedness, they are obliged by their own *Interest* to wish there were no God to *observe* and *punish* them. And then *facilè credunt quod volunt*, they easily believe what they would have, and the *slenderest* probability will sway their Understanding to vote on the side of their *Interest* and *Affections*. So that when men are *resolved* to be wicked, Atheism is their *Interest* and *Refuge*, to which they are many times forced to fly in their own Defence, to avoid the Clamors and Persecutions of their Consciences. Had these men lived in those Good *Pagan* days wherein they might have *rioted* with Devotion, *Sacrificed* to the gods in drunken Bowls, and *Worshipt* in the Arms of a Strumpet; no men would have been more Religious than they; and could they *now* but *Compound* the matter so as that God should let *them* alone to enjoy their *Lusts*, there is no doubt

doubt but they would be well enough content to let *him* alone to enjoy his *Being*. But becauſe their ſenſe of him *frets* and *galls* them, they firſt grow impatient under it, and then ſet their Wits at Work to raiſe objections againſt it, and either to *laugh* or *diſpute* it out of their Minds. And accordingly *Plato* makes mention of a ſort of Atheiſts οἷς ἂν φῶς τῇ δόξῃ. τῇ θεῶν ἔρημα εἶναι πόντα, ἀκράτειαί τε ἡδονῶν καὶ λυπῶν προσπέσωσι, μνήμῃ τε ἰσχυραὶ καὶ μεγαθοῦς ὀξείας παρῶσι; who in conſequence of their Opinion that all things are void of Gods, have plunged themſelves into intemperance of Pleaſures and Pains being otherwiſe perſons of great Memories and quick Underſtandings, *De Leg. Lib.* 10. But alas, how unreaſonable is it in a matter of ſuch vaſt importance for men to *believe* by their *Intereſt* and *Affections*! 'tis true could men put out the Sun with *winking*, or extinguiſh the Nature of things by an obſtinate diſbelief of them, it would be very juſtifiable for thoſe men to *believe* there is no God whoſe *Intereſt* it is that there *ſhould* be none. But alas, the Natures of things are *unalterable* and will be what they *are* whatſoever our *Opinion* is about them. If there *be* a God, there *will* be one, whether we think fit to *believe* it

or no; and tho when the Intereſt of our Luſts requires it, we may poſſibly *diſpute* our ſelves out of the *Belief* of his Being, yet he is not to be diſputed out of his *Being*. We may indeed ſecure our ſelves from the *Dread* of his Vengeance by diſputing our ſelves into a *disbelief* of him, but we can never *ſecure* our ſelves by it from the *danger* of his Vengeance. And what a ſenſleſs thing is it for a man to ſhut his eyes againſt an unavoidable danger, merely for fear of being *frightned by* it; and when he might *ſhun* Gods Vengeance by *dreading* it, inſtead thereof to ſhun the *dread* of it? What is this but to ſet his Reaſon at work to rock his Conſcience aſleep, that ſo he may deſtroy himſelf without *fear* or *Diſturbance*.

II. ANOTHER great cauſe of Atheiſm is ſuperſtitious *Miſapprehenſions* concerning God; which tho they are Lodged in the *Mind*, yet are moſt commonly exhaled from the *Affections*, that like impure Bogs do generally breath up all thoſe Meteors that *darken* and *diſturb* the Region above. And indeed moſt of our ill apprehenſions of God are *tranſcribed* and *copied* from our own Affections; which be they never ſo *irregular*, our own ſelf-love will be apt to celebrate for *Perfections*. And then whatſoever

ſoever we eſteem a Perfection in *our ſelves*, we naturally attribute to *God*, who is the Source and Standard of all Perfection; and thoſe Affections of our own Nature which we moſt injuriouſly attribute to God, we love or hate in *him* according as we love or hate them in *other men*. Thus the *fond* and *indulgent*, who are apt to *doat* upon others without reaſon, and to *hug* even their Vices and Deformities, are prone to attribute their own temper to God, and to look upon him as a Being that is infinitely *indulgent* to thoſe whom *without* any reaſon he hath *choſen* for his Favourites. And becauſe he who is fond of *others*, loves others ſhould be fond of *him*, to be ſure he will love his *fond* God too, and be far more devoutly affected towards this *Idol* of his own temper, than to the *true* God himſelf cloathed in all the native Glory of his own Attributes. But on the contrary, thoſe who are *ſtern* and *peeviſh* and *implacable* can by no means indure their own temper in *others*; and therefore 'tis no wonder if they hate it in *God* to whom they are wont injuriouſlly to attribute it. For how is it poſſible for them to *affect* a Divinity whom they have pictured in their own Minds with ſuch a *ſtern* and *terrible* Aſpect, with an *Imperious*

Self-will that bears down all things before it by *irreſiſtible* Might without any Reſpect to *Right* or *Wrong*, with *bloody* hands and a *Vengeful* heart, and a *teſty*, *peeviſh* and *unaccountable* Nature that *loves* and *hates* without any reaſon, and is *pleaſed* or *diſpleaſed* as the *toy* takes it. And having thus ſet up ſuch a *grim* Idol of God in their Minds as they can by no means affect, they ſecretly *wiſh* there were no ſuch Being, which is the *brink* of Atheiſm. Thus their ghaſtly Apprehenſions of God meeting with the *ſurly* and *churliſh* temper within them, inſtead of moulding them into Devotion to him, commonly *inrage* and *canker* them with Malice againſt him; and accordingly *Plutarch* well obſerves ὐκ οἴεται θεὸς εἶναι ὁ ἄθεος, ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων ὐ θέλει, *i. e.* the Atheiſt *thinks* there is no God and he who hath dreadful Apprehenſions of him *wiſhes* there were none; and he who *wiſhes* there were none is but one remove from *believing* there is none. Thus you ſee in what a direct Line *Vice* leads to *Superſtition*, and Superſtition to *Atheiſm*. For *Pride* and *Wrath*, *Malice* and *Revenge* are naturally apt to ingender in mens Minds *horrid* and *frightful* Apprehenſions of God; which working on thoſe *ſour* and *rugged* Paſſions that begot them

them are as apt to *exaſperate* and *inrage* them againſt him; and then their *Reaſon* immediately takes part with their *Paſſion*, and to gratifie its *wiſh* that there were no God, ſets it ſelf induſtriouſly to *argue* him out of his Being. But alas, what an unreaſonable procedure is this, for men to *pin* their faults upon God, and dreſs him in their own Deformities, and when they have thus *diſguiſed* him by putting upon him their own frightful tempers, as the old Perſecutors did the Chriſtians by wrapping them in Lions Skins, to ſet on their Wit and Reaſon to *worry* him out of his Being; what is this but to make a God as the Heathens did their *Mercuries*, and then fling ſtones at him; to transform him into a *Monſtrous* Idol and then *diſlike* him, and then *daſh* him in pieces? But be not deceived, God will be what he *is*, a moſt *perfect*, *glorious*, and *amiable* Being, how inglorious ſoever he may appear to you through the falſe *Medium* of your own Diabolical temper, which like *Crimſon-coloured* Glaſs will repreſent the faireſt Objects to you *bloody* and *terrible*; But for you to *hate* God for no other reaſon but becauſe your own hateful Paſſions do reflect to you ſuch an inglorious Idea of him, and then to *deny* him becauſe you

hate him, is equally *impious* and *unreaſonable*.

III. ANOTHER great cauſe of Atheiſm is *Raſhneſs* and *Precipitancy* in *preſcribing* to and *pre-judging* the divine Providence; and this alſo moſt commonly ariſes from ſome great *Irregularity* in mens Wills and Affections. For generally the *raſh* Judgments which men make of the divine Providence, are grounded on thoſe *unequal* Diſtributions it makes of the good things of this World in proſpering the *Bad* and afflicting the *Good*, upon which we are too often ready to Charge it with being an *unequal* Arbitrator of mens Fates. The occaſion of which is our *immoderate* Eſtimation of the Goods and Evils of this World. We ſo *inhance* the Goods of it in our Opinion, as to think them *great* enough to be the *Crowns* and *Rewards* of Virtue; and have ſuch *horrible* Apprehenſions of of the Evils of it, as to imagine them *great* enough to be the *Plagues* and *Puniſhments* of the moſt *obſtinate* and *notorious* Offenders. Whereas by the whole Courſe of his Providence it appears that God hath a different eſteem of them *both*; that he thinks the *beſt* things of this World to be *bad* enough to be thrown away upon the moſt deſpicable perſons; and therefore to expreſs his Scorn of theſe *admired* Vanities

ties, he many times ſcatters them with a *careleſs* hand, as not thinking it worth the while to be ſo *exact* in the Diſtribution of them, as to put them in Gold Scales and weigh them out to Mankind by *Grains* and *Scruples*. And as for the *worſt* things of this World he thinks them not ſo *bad* but that they may be indured without any conſiderable Damage to the Sufferer; and therefore many times ſuffers them to befall his own *Favourites*, as not thinking it of Moment enough to interpoſe his Providence to ſhield them againſt their *impotent* Impreſſions. And upon this difference of Judgment men too often ground an *inveterate* Quarrel againſt God, and becauſe they *doat* upon this World, and thing the Goods of it *good* enough to be the Portion of good Men, and the Evils of it *bad* enough to be the Puniſhment of bad, they are angry with God for not being of *their* Opinion, and are ready to *arraign* his Providence, and to conclude that this World is govern'd by a *blind* Chance that drops her Favours at random, as the full plumed Hawk mews her looſe Feathers and never cares who ſtoops to take them up. And this *Ovid* ingeniouſly acknowledges of himſelf.

Dum rapiunt mala fata bonos, ignoſcite faſſo,
Sollicitor nullos eſſe putare Deos; *i. e.*

While I behold ill Fates attend good men, I am tempted to think there are no gods.

Marmoreo Licinus tumulo jacet, at Cato parvo,
Pompeius nullo, quis putet esse Deos?

The wicked Licinus *lies in a Marble Tomb, but* Cato *in a ſmall one, and* Pompey *in none, who would think there were gods?*

So alſo there are others, who beholding themſelves in the *flattering* Mirror of their own ſelf-conceit, are ſo taken with the Reflections of their own *Merit* and *Excellency*, as that they cannot ſee how 'tis poſſible but that if there *be* a God he muſt *love* and *reward* them; and therefore if inſtead of ſo doing, God either *deprives* them of thoſe worldly Goods which they *doat* on, or *fruſtrates* them of thoſe carnal Hopes for whoſe Accompliſhment they have *earneſtly* ſupplicated, they preſently begin to murmur againſt him, and thence proceed to *arraign* the Juſtice of his Providence, and thence to *deny* both *that* and his *Being*. For thus it comes to paſs, ſaith *Simplicius*, that ſuch who have no grounded Belief of a Deity, when they obſerve the Miſeries of *good* Men, and the Proſperities of *bad*, are without any Regard to the common Notions of a God, ready to cry out with him

with him in the *Tragedian* τολμῶ κατειπεῖν μήποτ' οὐκ εἴσιν θεοί, κακοὶ γὰρ εὐτυχοῦντες ἐπιπλήττουσί με, *i. e.* I dare affirm there are no Gods, because the wicked prosper that hurt me. Thus from their fond Affection to these worldly Goods, men frequently take occasion to *quarrel* with Gods Providence, for not appropriating them to be the Rewards of Virtue; and being once engaged in a Quarrel against his *Providence*, their next attempt is to dispute him out of his *Being*.

But what an unreasonable way of concluding is this? *I* value this to be best and that to be worst, and therefore God ought to be of *my* Opinion, and to proceed accordingly in his Providence over the World; for there is nothing *can* be better or worse within the Prospect of an infinite Wisdom than what I *apprehend* to be best and worst for Mankind; and therefore if he will do good to the Good, it must be in the Method that I shall prescribe him, that is to say, he must *crown* them with Rose-buds, and *cloath* them in Purple, and *feed* them with the fat of the Land; and if he punish the Wicked he must give *me* leave to give aim to his Arrows, and to *direct* him *how*, and *what*, and *when*, and *where* to shoot, and so long

am

I am *contented* to allow him a Being in the World; but if he will presume to cross *my* Opinion of things, and steer his Actions by the unerring Compass of his *own* infinite Wisdom; if he will rather choose to do good to the Good by *chastening* than by *prospering* them, and to *avenge* himself upon the Wicked by *fattening* them with Prosperity for Slaughter, I shall look upon it as such an Affront to *my* judgment as will admit of no *meaner* Expiation than the *stripping* him out of his Providence and Being. And what can be more ridiculous than for men to *deny* the Being of God, because his *Providence* sometimes crosses their foolish Opinion of things, and doth not Govern it self by the *crooked* Rules which they are pleased to prescribe it.

IV. ANOTHER great cause of Atheism is vain *Affectation* of *Singularity* in Opinion; a Vice that hath been always incident to men of *Speculation*, who valuing themselves upon the stock of their Knowledg and deep Insight into the Nature of things, have always affected to *start* new Notions and *advance* contrary Hypotheses to the received Opinions of Mankind, that so they may be vogued for men of *singular* Knowledg, and seem to have

have *taller* Underſtandings than the reſt of their Brethren, And this I doubt not hath been one great cauſe of *ſpeculative Atheiſm*; for there is no Principle in Nature which hath been more *univerſally* received among Men than the Belief of a Deity; which doubtleſs is the main Reaſon why men who affect Singularity have been ſo prone to *quarrel* at it. It doth not comport with their Deſign of being thought *wiſer* than the reſt of the World, to ſubmit their Underſtandings to *common* Notions and *univerſal* Doctrins; becauſe ſhould they think as *other* Men do, they might probably be thought no wiſer. Perhaps had the Belief of a Deity been *lately* ſtarted, and only received by ſome *ſingular* Sect of Vertuoſoes, theſe men might have beeen as forward to *entertain* it as they are now to *reject* it; but becauſe it is an *Old-faſhion* Doctrine, in which all Ages and Nations have *concurred*, they think it would be a *diſcredit* to their Underſtanding to *wear* it, and therefore they ſet their Wits at work to invent Atheiſtical Hypotheſes to ſolve the *Phænomena* of Nature without a Deity. And he that doth but impartially conſider the *haughty* Genius of thoſe Philoſophers that laid the Foundations of *Speculative Atheiſm*, may eaſily perceive

perceive that the great Motive of their Infidelity was nothing but a *proud Affectation* of thinking counter to Mankind. And indeed could I but embrace the Doctrine of the *Transmigration* of Souls, I should be tempted to believe by the *likeness* of their Humors that it was one and the same Soul that pass'd through *Democritus* into *Protagoras*, through *Protagoras* into *Epicurus* and through *Epicurus* into Mr. *Hobbs*; And since they so exactly agreed in their *Pride* and haughty *Ostentation* of Knowledg, it is justly supposable that this was the *main* cause of their *Agreement* in Atheism; which being a *Singular* Doctrine and directly contradictory to the *common* Notions of Mankind, was upon that account more adapted to the humor of these *arrogant* Philosophers, And accordingly *Plato* describes the Atheists of his Age to be a *conceited* and *scornful* sort of People, and declares the cause of their Atheism to be ἀμάθεια μάλα χαλεπὴ δοκοῦσα εἶναι μεγίστη φρόνησις, *a certain pernicious sort of ignorance that put on a semblance of the greatest Wisdom*; and afterwards he calls Athetheism τὸ παρὰ πολλοῖς δοξαζόμενον εἶναι σοφώτατον πάντων λόγων, *that which in the Eyes of some conceited people seemed to be the wisest of all Doctrines, de Leg. Lib.* 10.

And

And becauſe theſe Atheiſtical Philoſophers, who were ſome of them great Maſters of Wit and Learning, had the good luck to be *remarqued* and *gazed* on like ſo many *Anticks* for their Singularity, they have always found Diſciples and Followers among the people of *little* Senſe and a *great* deal of Vanity, who being ambitious of the *Reputation* of Wits and Philoſophers, but having neither *Brains* nor *Induſtry* enough to merit it, are fain to *ſhelter* their Ignorance in Atheiſm, and there to face it out with *laughter* and *boldneſs*; and becauſe by laughing at God and Religion they *deride* the common Faith of Mankind, they fancy themſelves ſingularly *witty*, and expect that *others* ſhould fancy them ſo too; whereas in reality theſe *little People* are but meer *Pretenders* to ſpeculative Atheiſm. For before they can be *more*, they muſt comprehend the whole Syſtem of the Atheiſtical Philoſophy, and be able to deſcribe all thoſe ſuppoſed Laws of *Motion*, by which *Matter* without the Conduct of a *Superior* Wiſdom and Power did originally range it ſelf into this beautiful World, and to ſhew at leaſt the poſſibility of all the ſtrange *Appearances* in Nature, without *ſuppoſing* a God; which is ſuch a task as their *feeble* Underſtandings durſt never

never attempt; for the utmoſt they can pretend to is a few Terms of the *Atheiſtical Philoſophy*, which they have learned by *rote*, and do *cant* and *ſmatter* with as much Skill and Underſtanding as Parrots do the Leſſons that are taught them. And tho the brisk young Gentlemen will ſometimes *boldly* affirm, and if you dare take them up will lay a *Wager* on it too, that *Reaſon* is nothing but a *Train* of *Imaginations*; that *Choice* is nothing but the *laſt ſtroke* of outward Object on the *Fancy*; and that there is nothing in Nature but *Matter* and *Motion*; yet ſhould you be ſo rude as to ask them what they mean by theſe Phraſes, you would *uncaſe* their Ignorance and utterly *undoe* them. So that ſuch as theſe are only the *Hawkers* and *Retailers* of Atheiſm, that *noiſe* and *cry* it about; but have neither Wit not Induſtry enough to *underſtand* it, but do take it up with the ſame *implicit* Faith as the Papiſts do their Religion. Thus as the *Ambition* of being accounted *wiſer* than others, cauſes men to affect *Singularity* in their Opinions, ſo the *Affectation* of Singularity in Opinion doth very often tranſport men into *Atheiſm*.

Now tho I would by no means plead for Mens *enſlaving* their Underſtandings to *vulgar*

vulgar Opinions, ſo as to put a *ſtop* to all Advancements of *Knowledge*, and *hinder* the World from ever growing *wiſer*; yet doubtleſs for men to *quarrel* at Opinions for no other reaſon but *becauſe* they are *vulgarly* received, is not only a rude *Affront* to the Reaſon of Mankind; but alſo an effectual way to involve our ſelves in an endleſs *Labyrinth* of miſtakes. For while I *affect* to be ſingular in my Opinion, I *deprive* my ſelf of the Aſſiſtance of *other* mens Underſtandings, and in my travel for Knowledge chuſe rather to go *alone* by my ſelf through *untrodden* by-ways, than to keep the *Road* and follow the *Tract* of thoſe that have gone before me. So that unleſs I am *wiſer* than all the World, which is very *unlikely*, it is a thouſand to one but I *bewilder* and *looſe* my ſelf; for how *wiſe* and *ſagacious* ſoever I may be, it is certain that *many* Heads are wiſer than *one*; and therefore when all heads *concur* in the ſame judgment, it is *probable* at leaſt that that judgment is *true*; he therefore who rejects an Opinion becauſe *all* or *moſt* do embrace it, *affects* to think counter to the *ſtrongeſt* Evidence, and to believe againſt the *greateſt* Probability. 'Tis true in many things the generality of men have been *miſtaken*, which is a ſufficient

reaſon why we ſhould not *pin* our Faith upon the Sleeve of *Vulgar* Opinions, but impartially *examine* before we confidently *embrace* them; but yet there is a Reverence due to the *Judgment of Mankind*, and the Laws of *Modeſty* require us not to be *confident* againſt it without very great reaſon; but to *affect* to run counter to it, eſpecially in ſuch a matter of moment as the *Belief* or *Disbelief* of a Deity, is not only the higheſt *Arrogance* but the moſt extravagant *Madneſs*. For it is *at leaſt* probable that there is a God, becauſe *all* Mankind do *believe* one, and if there *be* one, it is of *infinite* Moment that we ſhould *believe* it, and *act* accordingly; and therefore for men to turn Atheiſts out of mere *Singularity*, is not only to believe there is *no* God, becauſe it is probable there *is*, but to *play* and *dally* with ones own Fate, and run the *hazard* of being eternally miſerbale out of a *wanton* Affectation of *contradicting* the Judgment of Mankind.

V. ANOTHER great Cauſe of Atheiſm is cuſtom of *drolling on* and *ridiculing* the moſt *ſerious* things; a humour which hath ſtrangely prevailed in this *pleaſant* and *jocular* Age, wherein the wild *rovings* of mens Fancies into *odd* Similitudes, *ſtartling* Metaphors, *humorous* Expreſſions, and *ſportive*

ſportive Repreſentations of things are grown more acceptable in almoſt all Converſations, than the moſt *ſolid* Reaſon and Diſcourſe, and 'tis generally lookt upon as a far more *genteel* and *faſhionable* Quality for a man to be *witty* than *Wiſe*. Now though I do not deny but that Wit in it ſelf is a very *uſeful* and *valuable* Indowment, and ſerves to many *excellent* purpoſes; as namely to *polliſh* and *adorn* the moſt ſerious Truths, and repreſent them to mens Minds in the moſt *comely* and *affecting* Dreſſes; to *expoſe* what is apparently *baſe* and *ridiculous*, and *laſh* it with the *Satyrs* it makes againſt *it ſelf*; to *quicken* and *give life* to a ſolid Argument, and render it more *piercing* and *convictive*; and in a word, to *indear* our Society, and give a *reliſh* and *picquancy* to our Converſation, and to *recreate* our Minds after we have been *tired* out or *cloyed* with *ſeverer* Occupations; though Wit, I ſay, be a very uſeful Quality as to all theſe good purpoſes, yet unleſs a *wiſe* Man hath the *keeping* it, that knows *when* and *where* and *how* to apply it, it is like Wild-fire that flies *at rovers*, runs *hiſſing* about, and *blows up* every thing that comes in its way without any reſpect or diſcrimination. And indeed the more

grave and *ſerious* any thing is, the more *prone* it will be to *expoſe* and *ridicule* it. For the *life* of Wit conſiſts in the *ſurpriſingneſs* of its Conceits and Expreſſions, in making ſuch *ſmart* or *uncouth* Repreſentations of things as are moſt apt to raiſe a *pleaſing Wonder* and *Amazement* in thoſe that hear us. Now there is nothing more *ſurpriſing* in its own nature, than to ſee or hear a *ſerious* thing *ſportfully* repreſented, and dreſt up in an *antick* and *ridiculous* Diſguiſe; the very expoſing it in a Garb and Figure ſo *unexpected* becauſe ſo very *unlike* and *unſutable* to it ſelf, is apt of its own Nature to *ſurpriſe* and *amuſe* the Spectators or Hearers; which ſurpriſe, if he be a *vain* perſon, will *tickle* him into Laughter, but if he be *ſerious*, will affect him with *Deteſtation* and *Horror* to ſee a ſerious thing ſo *contemptibly* treated. But the greateſt part of Men being of *vain* and *trifling* Spirits, that are *whiſled* up and down in little *levities* of Fancy, there is nothing commonly doth more *gratefully* ſurpriſe them and provoke their *Laughter*, than *ridiculous* Repreſentations of *ſerious* Arguments; and hence it comes to paſs that 'tis grown a great Inſtance of wit among the generality of men to *ſport* and *play* with *ſerious* things, to *burleſque* the

ſenſe

ſenſe of them, and apply them to *ridiculous* purpoſes; whereas in reality this *miſtaken* ſort of Wit is nothing but *dull* and *impudent* Buffoonery, and a very *little* Wit joyned with a *great deal* of Saucineſs will enable a Man to make *ſport* with the moſt ſerious Arguments. For 'tis but *cloathing* them in *rude* and *porterly* Expreſſions, or *miſconſtruing* them to a *profane* or *ludicrous* ſenſe, or *debauching* the Phraſes by which they are expreſſed to a *ſilly* or a *wicked* meaning, and it ſhall be preſently *cried up* for an excellent Jeſt, and the Author of it dubb'd a *Wit Laureat*. This therefore being ſo eaſie a way for *dull* people to advance themſelves to the Reputation of *Wits*, hath of *late years* eſpecially been mightily frequented by the *impotent* Well-wiſhers to Wit and Ingenuity; and becauſe *Religion* hath been always eſteemed the *moſt ſerious* thing in the World, therefore they fix upon *that* as the common Theme of their *Raillery*, conſidering that the *more* ſerious it is, the more it will ſurpriſe men to hear it *burleſqued* and *drolled on*. So that if they do but ſpeak *ſlightly* and *irreverently* of *God*, or never ſo *clowniſhly* ridicule a *Myſtery* of Religion, or cloath an *obſcene* Thought in a *Text of Scripture*, their *Saucineſs* will ſupply the

defect of their *Wit*, and men will laugh not ſo much at the *Picquancy* of their Conceit, as at the *Boldneſs* and *Preſumption* of it; and becauſe their Diſcourſe hath the *luck* to be *laughed at*, they think themſelves *celebrated* for the *Oracles* of Wit, and are thereby emboldened to *proceed* in this their *impious* Buffoonery, till at laſt they have drolled themſelves into a *Contempt* of God, and from thence into *downright* Atheiſm. For tho a *Jeſt* be no *Argument* nor yet a *loud laughter* a *Demonſtration*, yet if you inſpect the generality of our *little Pretenders* to Atheiſm, you will find *this* is the main Foundation that their Irreligion depends on; for their gift conſiſts not in *arguing* and *demonſtrating*, but in ſuch a *Sett* of *fine* Phraſes and *terſe* Oaths; and all the Stock of Learning they pretend to is a few *ſhavings* of Wit gathered out of *Plays* and *Romances*, and theſe they *pin* upon *Religion*, as you have ſeen unhappy Boys do Rags at mens Backs, to *expoſe* it to Scorn and Deriſion; and having accuſtomed themſelves to treat it with ſuch *rude* and *porterly* Contempt and Diſingenuity, it grows by degrees *cheap* and *vile* in their Eyes, and at laſt is rejected by them as a *ridiculous Impoſture*; and if *now* when they are urged with *Evidences* of Religion,

Religion, they have but Wit enough to answer *Reason* with *Drollery*, and to retort a *Jest* to a *Demonstration*, how *gloriously* do they imagine they have acquitted themselves, and with what *triumphant* Shrugs do they celebrate their Victory over *the little man in black.*

Now tho for men to *deride* what they do not *understand*, savours neither of *Learning* nor *good Manners*, and is equally unbecoming a *Gentleman* and a *Scholar*; and tho for a man to venture to be *damned* for deriding of God and Religion, is such a Triumph of *Wit* as argues the utter Defect of his *Reason*, yet so long as there are *vain* men enough to be *tickled* with this profane sort of Drollery, to be sure there will never want *Fools* enough to *venture* on it. For when a *Fop* will needs aspire to the Reputation of a *Wit*, he hath no other way but to dress up Religion in a *Fools-Coat*, and expose it for a Spectacle of *Derision*, and then how *dull* soever the Conceit be, the stupendous *Presumption* of it will *suprise* and *amuse* the Company, and men will *admire* him just as they do *Rope-dancers* for *daring* to *perform* what a wise Man would *tremble* to *attempt*; and being thus emboldened by the *Admiration* and *Laughter* of his Company, which the *vain*

Creature miſtakes for a *Proof* and *Evidence* of his Wit, he grows more *pert* and *confident*, and ſo *fools* and *fleers* on till he hath *toyed* and *laughed* himſelf out of all ſenſe of Religion.

BUT alaſs! what a *deſperate* piece of *Folly* is this, for men thus to *ſport* and *dally* with the Almighty, whoſe Vengeance they can neither *withſtand* nor *indure*; to *point* and *make Mouths* at him to his Face, and ſet him up as the Finger-butt of their *Scorn* and *Deriſion*! For certainly if there be Sins that can raiſe a Cry *loud* enough to reach Heaven, *this*, as a great Author of our own hath expreſſed it, will be ſo far from *whiſpering* there, that 'twill give an *Alarm* to the Vengeance of Heaven, whoſe Inflictions like Stones tumbling from the tops of Towers, will by ſo much the more *fatally* cruſh thoſe they light on, by how much the *longer* they are falling upon them. And therefore for Men thus to *dally* with their own *Fate*, to *venture* to be *damn'd* that they may be thought to be *witty*, and expoſe themſelves to endleſs *wailing* and *Wo* only to raiſe a preſent *fit of Laughter*, is doubtleſs a far more deſperate Attempt than 'twould be to play at the mouths of Canons while they are ſpitting Fire, or to lay hold on a Thunderbolt

derbolt as it comes roaring down from the Clouds.

But ſuppoſe there were neither *Evil* nor *Danger* in this impious Practice, yet for men to conclude there *is* no God becauſe they have the Confidence to *ſcorn* and *deſpiſe* him, is altogether as *ridiculous* as their deſpiſing him is *impious*. For there is nothing in Nature ſo *real* or *ſerious* but may be *drolled* and *Rallied* on; if a man will ſet his Wits at work he may *break Jeſts* upon *Pain*, and entertain his Company with *Comical Repreſentations* of the *Groans* and *Agonies* of dying; but it would be a Jeſt *indeed* ſhould he *droll* himſelf into a *Belief* that there are no ſuch things as *Pain* or *Death*; but alas, things are not to be altered by *laughing* at them, and how *merry* ſoever we may make our ſelves with the *Belief* and *Notion* of a Deity, we ſhall one day find *in earneſt* that he is not to be *jeſted* out of his *Being*.

VI. Another cauſe of Atheiſm is taking up Religion or Opinions in Religion without *Examination*. The generality of men do embrace their Religion as a part of their *Fate*, as the Temper of their *Clime*, or the Entail of their *Anceſtors*; and the reaſon why they are *Chriſtians* is, becauſe Chriſtianity had the luck to *be-*

ſpeak them firſt, and by its timely Interpoſure to *prepoſſeſs* and *foreſtall* them. So that in all probability had *Mahometiſm* plied them *firſt*, they would have had as much Faith for the *Alchoran* as they have now for the *Bible*. Now when Men thus take up their Religion they know not *why*, their minds muſt needs be left *naked* and *defenceleſs* to all the Temptations of Atheiſm. For when a Man can render no *reaſon* for his Religion, his Faith hath nothing but blind *Prejudice* to ſupport it; and 'tis with his *Will* that he believes and not with his *Underſtanding*; ſo that he may chuſe whether he will believe or no, becauſe he hath no *Evidence* to determine his *Underſtanding*. And how *unſtable* and *inſecure* muſt his Faith needs be, when it hath no other Foundation but a *fickle* and *inconſtant* Will; when it lies at the mercy of his *Humour* and *Inclinations*, and it is in his power to determine his Aſſent to *that* ſide of the Queſtion which is moſt for his *Intereſt*? For now his *Faith* being determined by his *Will*, and his Will by his *Intereſt*, whenever he thinks it his Intereſt that there *ſhould* be no God, to be ſure he will be ready enough to believe that there *is* none; and conſequently as ſoon as he grows wicked enough to *need*

Atheiſm

Atheiſm for a *Refuge* from his Conſcience, he will betake himſelf *thither* in his own defence, and endeavour by an obſtinate *Diſbelief* of Gods *Being*, to *ſhelter* himſelf from the *Dread* of his *Power*. Thus when mens belief is not grounded upon *Reaſon* and *Evidence*, but ſtands *tottering* on the fickle Foundation of their *Wills*, it is liable to be *blown down* by every Blaſt of Temptation. And *hence* I doubt not in a great meaſure proceeds the *Irreligion* of the Age *we* live in; for if you ſurveigh the preſent *Sticklers* for Atheiſm, you will find they chiefly conſiſt of the *hair-brain'd* and *uncatechiſed* Youths of the Town, who never troubled themſelves to underſtand the firſt *Principles* of *Religion*, nor to conſider the *Dependence* and *Connexion* of its *Doctrines*, and know nothing at all either of the admirable *Contexture* of the *Parts* of it, or of the *Reaſon* and *Evidence* of the *Whole*. For alas, their Study hath been employed *another* way, *viz.* in courtly *Forms* of Speech and *Punctilioes* of Action, in *faſhionable* Garbs and Oaths and *artificial* Luxuries, in *conning* of fine Jeſts and Modes of Addreſs, and *retailing* Fragments of Wit from Plays and Romances; but as for the *ſeverer* and more *uſeful* Studies they bequeath them to the *dull* men of *Senſe* and *Reaſon*.

SUCH as *these* for the most part are the *Sages* that *droll* upon Religion and *make jests* upon the Scripture; and what wonder is it that such as these turn *Infidels*, who were never able to render any *Reason* of their *Faith*? For how *weak* soever the Arguments of *Infidelity* are, it is a hard case if it cannot *baffle* that Faith which hath no Reason on its side to *guard* and *defend* it; especially when they are *seconded* with a mans *Lusts* and *Inclinations*, as to be sure the Arguments of Infidelity will always be. For when a man hath no Reason *for* his Faith, but a great many Lusts *against* it, the *slendereſt* shews of *Probability* will suffice to make him an Infidel. But what an horrible Neglect is it for Men that have Reason to *distinguish* between *Truth* and *Falshood*, to take no care to enquire into the *Truth* and *Evidence* of their Religion in which their greateſt *Intereſt* is involved; but to *wink hard* and believe at *a venture* they know not *why* nor *what*? what is this but to *caſt Lots* for their Souls, and throw *Croſs* or *Pile* for their eternal Salvation? They reſolve, they say, to adhere to the Religion of their *Anceſtors*, but whether that be *true* or *falſe* they never *inquire*; so that if it be *true*, they may thank their *Stars* for it, but if it be *falſe*, they

they have the worſe *Luck*. Thus they wholly commit themſelves to the Conduct of *Chance* to be conducted to *Heaven* or *Hell*, as it *happens*; and as if thoſe *diſtant* Fates were *indifferent* to them, they concern not themſelves to inquire whether the way they are in be the *Broad* or the *Narrow*, the *Right* or the *Wrong*, but e'en leave the *Event* to determine it. And can any thing in the World be more *wild* or *extravagant*, than for men who are ſo *ſolicitous* about their ſmaller concerns, who will not *purchaſe* an Acre of Land without examining the *Deeds* and *Evidences* by which the Right to it is Conveyed, thus to take up their Religion upon *Truſt*, and *ſtake* their everlaſting Fate upon ſuch a *deſperate* venture? But then for men to take occaſion to *deſpiſe* and *reject* Religion from their own *ſottiſh* Neglect to *inquire* into the Truth of it, is ſuch an height of *Extravagance* as no *Bedlam* can parallel; it would be as reaſonable for a man to *put out* his Eyes, and then *reſolve* not to *believe* there is a Sun in the Firmament becauſe he doth not ſee it, or to *ſtop up* his Ears, and then *peremptorily* deny the *Being* of Sounds becauſe he do's not *hear* 'em; for for men thus to graft *Infidelity* upon *Ignorance*, is only to heap *one* Extravagance on *another*; if they underſtand *not* the

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Evidence of Religion the more *Shame* it is for them, but methinks it might very well become them to be *modeſt* and *teachable* till they *do*; and in the mean while to take care to *inform* themſelves *better*; but thus immediately to leap out of *Ignorance* into *Atheiſm*, is firſt to play the *Fool*, and then run *ſtark mad* upon it.

VII. ANOTHER cauſe of Atheiſm is mens meaſuring the *Truth* or *Falſhood* of Religion by the *Practice* of ſuch as make the loudeſt *Pretence* to it. When a man is unwilling to undergo the trouble of ſatisfying his *own Reaſon* of the Truth of his Religion, his uſual Method is to *inquire* what *other* men think of it, who by the *zealous* Profeſſion which they make may be ſuppoſed to *underſtand* it better than *himſelf*; but becauſe mens Thoughts are *ſecret* and *inviſible*, and do not always *correſpond* with their *Words* and *Profeſſions*; therefore to ſatisfie himſelf what other men *think* of Religion, he concludes the ſafeſt way is to judge by what they *do*, and not by what they *profeſs*; and ſo far indeed he is in the right. For to be ſure mens *Actions* are a much more *certain* Index of their *Thoughts* than their *Words*; and therefore when he ſees thoſe who *profeſs* Religion *act* as if they did not *believe* it,

and

and observes how their *Words* do run at ſtrife at their *Practice*, and how *broadly* their Lives *give the lie* to their Profeſſions, he preſently concludes that whatever they *pretend* they are *Infidels* in their Hearts; and being once perſuaded that thoſe whom he thinks do beſt *underſtand* Religion do not *believe* it, he thence immediately concludes that they find no *reaſon* to believe it, and do only put on the *Profeſſion* of it as an *Angelical* Vizor, being minded to play the *Devils* in it with more *Credit* and *Security*. And by this Popular way of reaſoning they conclude Religion to be nothing but a Politick *Device* and *Engine* which wiſe men have contrived to *beguile* and *manage* the ſimple; and that whatſoever is *pretended* for it, it is a mere *juggling-box* which Knaves play tricks with to *delude* and *cozen* Fools. And of this way of mens reaſoning themſelves into Atheiſm the Age we live in is full of wofull Inſtances; for now adays to *ſcorn* and *deſpiſe* Religion is no longer the Prerogative of *Wits* and *Vertuoſoes*, but the Infection is ſpread and propagated into *Shops* and *Stalls*, and the *Rabble* are become *Profeſſors* of Atheiſm. Now whence ſhould this proceed? alas, it is not to be ſuppoſed that ſuch perſons as theſe ſhould ever be able to *Philoſophiſe*

ſophiſe themſelves into Infidelity, and turn Atheiſts either upon *Ariſtotle*'s or *Epicurus*'s Hypotheſes; no, no, their Argument lies *nearer home*, and more *open* to their Capacities; they have ſeen a world of *vile tricks* played in our Religious *Carnivals* and *Maſquerades*; ſome making their Religion a *Sanctuary* for their *Treaſons* and *Rebellions*; others *gilding* over their *Faction* and *Sedition* with a ſpecious Pretence of *zeal* for Gods glory: ſome proſecuting their own *Revenge* and *Ambition* under the Enſigns of *pure Worſhip*, and *true Proteſtant Religion*; others *commuting* for their Exceſſes of *Riot* with a clamorous zeal for *Decency* and *Order*, and others *picking Pockets* with *one* hand while they have been *lifting up* the other to Heaven in *Devotion*; the ſight of which hath tempted the *rude* and *unthinking* Vulgar to look upon Religion as a mere *Caſtle in the Air*, that hath no Foundation, but in the *Invention* of Knaves and in the *Faith* of Fools.

Now tho there is no doubt to be made but that theſe vile *Hypocrites* who have laid this *Stumbling-block* in mens way, ſhall one day *dearly* anſwer for the *ruin* of thoſe whom it hath occaſioned to *fall*, and for thus *expoſing* the Credit and Reputation

putation of Religion to the *miſpriſions* of thoſe that do not *underſtand* it; yet it is a moſt inexcuſable piece of *folly* for men thus to *infer Atheiſtical* Concluſions from the ill Example of *Hypocritical Profeſſors.* For in the firſt place, to conclude a Man an *Infidel* becauſe his Actions *run counter* to the Faith he pretends to, is very *raſh* and *fallacious.* For do we not ſee Men very often act *againſt* their Conſciences, and fly in the face of their *own* Convictions? why may we not then as fairly ſuppoſe thoſe wicked Actions we argue from to be the effects of an *obſtinate* Will as of an *Infidel* Judgment; but ſuppoſe it were true that thoſe men were all *Infidels* that do thus act againſt their *Faith*, doth it therefore follow that *you* muſt turn Infidels too? if it be ſo *unſafe* and ſo *unworthy* of a man to carry his Brains in other Mens *Heads*, what a ſhame is it to carry them in other Mens *Heels*, and to ſuffer his Faith to be lead by the *Tract* of their Examples through all the wild *Mazes* of Irreligion and Atheiſm?

But you will ſay, by theſe Mens Examples you plainly ſee what a Myſtery of Iniquity there is in *religious Pretences*; and what then? muſt Religion be a *Cheat* becauſe bad Men *play tricks* with it, and make

make it a *Cloak* for their Knavery? if ſo, then the beſt things in the World are liable to *Suſpicion*; becauſe there is nothing ſo *good* but what is capable of being proſtituted to very *ill* purpoſes. I confeſs when we ſee ſo many *Cheats* acted under the *Maſque* of Religion, we have juſt reaſon to call it to a more *ſevere* Examination, and to inquire more *narrowly* into the Proofs and Evidences upon which it is founded; but preſently to *reject* Religion becauſe *Knaves* and *Hypocrites* make bold to diſguiſe themſelves in it, is every whit as *abſurd* and *ridiculous* as if a man ſhould deny that there is any ſuch Virtue as *Chaſtity* in the World, becauſe there are common *Proſtitutes* that pretend to it.

VIII. ANOTHER cauſe of Atheiſm is *Diviſions* and *Schiſms* formed out of little Opinions in Religion. For it is natural to men to place a great part of their Religion in thoſe Opinions, for whoſe ſake they *divide* and *ſeparate* from each other; ſo that if *hereafter* they happen to be diſſatisfied with thoſe Opinions of which they are exceſſively fond at *the preſent*, they will be under a great Temptation to ſuſpect *Religion it ſelf*, as if that were as ill grounded as thoſe *little Opinions* which they laid ſo great a *ſtreſs* on, and ſo after they

they have run through ſeveral *Sects* of Opinions, and in fine have diſcovered them to be *all* Deluſions, they are ready to conclude Religion *it ſelf* to be nothing but a Syſtem of *Lies* and *Impoſtures*. For as weak Heads when they perceive the *Battlements* ſhake are apt to ſuſpect the *Foundations*, ſo weak Underſtandings will be prone to ſuſpect even the *Fundamentals* of of Religion, when once they perceive thoſe darling Notions *totter* which they have confidently preſumed to *ſuperſtruct* thereupon.

AND upon this account I make no doubt but that the Irreligion of this Age is very much to be attributed to the *Sects* and *Diviſions* of it. For how many woful Examples have we of Perſons who had once a great *Zeal* for and *Satisfaction* in Religion, that upon their *cauſeleſs* Separation from the Churches Communion, have run from *Sect* to *Sect*, and from *one* extravagant Opinion to *another*, till at laſt being convinced of the *Cheats* and *Impoſtures* of them all, they have totally diſcarded Religion *it ſelf*, and made their laſt Reſort into *Atheiſm*. And as ſeparating into Parties upon *little* Differences in Religion expoſes the Separatiſts *themſelves* to great Temptations to Atheiſm, ſo it doth thoſe

alſo who are *Indifferent* on both ſides, and ſtand ingaged on *neither* part of the Separation. For whilſt theſe men behold the State of Religion thus miſerably *broken* and *divided*, and the Profeſſors of it *crumbled* into ſo many *Sects* and *Parties*, and each Party ſpitting *Fire* and *Damnation* at its Adverſary; ſo that if *all* ſay true, or indeed any *two* of them in *five hundred* Sects which there are in the World, (and for all I know there may be *five thouſand*) it is *five hundred* to one but that every one is *damn'd*, becauſe every *one* damns *all* but it ſelf, and *it ſelf* is damn'd by *four hundred and ninty nine*; ſo that 'tis a mighty Chance if in ſo great a Volly of *Anathemaes* which *every one* hath levelled at it, *any one* eſcape: When, I ſay, unengaged perſons that are not able to diſtinguiſh between the *diſputable Opinions* that conſtitute theſe Sects, and the *Neceſſaries* and *Eſſentials* of Religion, ſhall reflect upon this tumult and confuſion of Faiths, they will be apt to conclude without farther Inquiry, that Religion it ſelf is nothing but an infinite Maze of *diſputable Opinions*, wherein Men wander about in the dark and *juſtle* and *rancounter* one another without any certain Clew on either ſide to *guide* and *direct* their Inquiries; under which Miſappre-

Miſapprehenſion they will either damn *all* Religion for a *Cheat*, or *hover* about in eternal *uncertainty*, not knowing where in ſo great a Confuſion of Religions to *fix* and *ſettle* their Faith. And hereunto I doubt not is to be attributed a great part of the *Irreligion* of this Age. For while ſome Men by running themſelves out of Breath in purſuit of thoſe *Ignes fatui* or *New Lights*, that have broken and divided our Communion, have at length quite tired out their Zeal and religious Pretences, and ſo are at length lain down in the Mire of *Irreligion* and open *Profaneneſs*; others by looking on and beholding the wild *Diviſions* which theſe new Lights have made, have been tempted to *run away* from Religion it ſelf, as if that were only a *Labyrinth* of uncertain Opinions contrived on purpoſe to *diſtract* and *bewilder* mens Brains.

Now tho the Authors of theſe *Diviſions*, whoſoever they are, are doubtleſs highly accountable to God for all that Irreligion which attends them, yet for Men from hence to draw Atheiſtical Concluſions is much more imputable to the *perverſeneſs* of their *Wills* than to the *Weakneſs* of their *Underſtandings*.

FOR in the first place, What if you have discovered some Opinions in Religion to be *false* and *erroneous*, of the Truth of which you were once very *confident*; doth it therefore follow that there is *nothing* certain in *Religion*? If so, you may as well conclude that there is nothing certain in the *Mathematicks* neither, since some men have been as confident of the Truth of false *Axioms* in *Geometry* as ever you could be of false *Propositions* in *Religion*. That you were once *over-confident* in a disputable Matter was your own *Fault* and *Folly*, but must it therefore follow that *Religion* is a *Cheat* because *you* have been rash and inconsiderate? and what tho you once laid the great *stress* of your Religion upon an Opinion which you *now* discern is erroneous, must Religion needs suffer for *your* Mistake, and be branded for an *Imposture* because you took that for Religion which was *not*? For there are a thousand Propositions about Religion, which have been Zealously disputed *for* and *against*, which have torn men into *Sects*, and been the Religion of the separate Communions they have *formed* and *denominated*, that yet are very remote *Superstructures* on the true *Foundations* of Religion, and may be *true*

or

or *falſe*, *believed* or *disbelieved* without any damage to Religion. And therefore before you ſuſpect the *Truth* of Religion it ſelf upon your diſcovering the *Falſhood* of any *particular Opinion*, you ought in all Reaſon to conſider whether that Opinion be ſo *eſſential* to Religion as that it cannot *ſubſiſt* without it; for if it be not, 'tis the moſt unreaſonable thing in the World, to infer a ſuſpicion of the Truth of *Religion* from the Falſhood of *Propoſitions* that have *little* or *no* Dependence on it, and to reject the *Gold* and the *precious Stones* for the ſake of the *Wood*, and *Hay*, and *Stubble* that have been ſuperſtructed upon them. And then

2. What can be more abſurd than for Men to *reject* Religion becauſe Mens *Opinions* about it have been ſo *divided*? For if you ſurvey the ſeveral *Diviſions* of Chriſtians, you will find they generally *concur* in all the *neceſſary* and *eſſential* Doctrines of Religion, and that the Opinions wherein they *divide*, are for the moſt part ſuch *unneceſſary* Speculations, as that it is almoſt *indifferent* to Religion whether they be *true* or *falſe*; And with what Reaſon can we ſuſpect the Truth of *neceſſary* Doctrines wherein *all* are agreed, becauſe there are Diſagreements in *unneceſſary* ones?

Becauſe there are ſome Propoſitions in the *Mathematicks*, about which the Opinions of the Mathematicians are *divided*, ſhall we therefore ſuſpect the Truth of all thoſe wherein they are *agreed*? For if their *Diſagreement* be an Argument of the *Falſhood* of the *former*, why ſhould not their *Agreement* be as good an Argument of the *Truth* of the *later*? But how much ſoever Mens Opinions about Religion may be *divided*, all that can be thence inferred is, that ſome Men are *miſtaken*; and while ſome Men judge of Religion by their *Paſſions* and *Intereſts*, and others by the *Prejudices* of their *Education*, it is impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe. But for men in the midſt of ſuch apparent cauſes of Difference, to reſolve to be of *no* Religion till all are agreed in *one*, is juſt as *wiſe*, and as *rational* as if they ſhould determine not to go to Dinner till all the Clocks in Town ſtrike Eleven together.

IX. And Laſtly, ANOTHER great cauſe of Atheiſm is the *profane* and *careleſs* Neglect of Gods *Publick Worſhip*. For Men of *Secular* lives whoſe Minds are always engaged in this eternal hurry of *worldly* Affairs, are too prone to forget God, and all their Concerns in *Religion* and *another World*; and even their converſing

verſing ſo much with theſe *ſenſitive* things which are always before them, and are continually *crouding* in upon their Thoughts, doth naturally *indiſpoſe* them to exerciſe their Faculties about *divine* and *ſpiritual* Objects, and render their Minds ἀπάδω ἕαρεῖς *unfit* and *unable* to aſcend to the Contemplation of God. And therefore God hath appointed the *ſtated* Times of Publick Worſhip, on purpoſe to withdraw Men from their *ſecular* Purſuits, that ſo they be at leiſure to *retire* into themſelves, to *recollect* their ſcattered Thoughts, and *awake* their Minds to a ſenſe of Piety and Religion; which can by no way ſo effectually be performed as by the Solemnities of *Publick Worſhip*, wherein our remembrance of God is not only *refreſhed*, and our Piety to him *excited* and *directed* by the publick Inſtructions, but our natural Senſe of Religion is alſo *actuated* and *intended* by the mutual *Concurrence* and *Example* of each others Devotion. Thus after our Religion hath been *ſlackned* by our worldly Cares and Delights, it is duely *wound up* again by the Returns of our Publick Worſhip, and ſo the ſenſe of God is ſtill *kept alive* in our Minds. When Men therefore turn their Backs upon the *Publick Worſhip*, and de-

vote the *holy Seaſons* of it to their ſecular Buſineſs or Pleaſures, it is not to be wondered at that their ſenſe of a divine Power, which they ſeldom or never *think of*, ſhould by degrees *decay* and *wear off*, and that *that* being extinguiſhed they ſhould ſink into *Irreligion* and *Atheiſm*. For when once Men have worn out their *Senſe* of a Deity, and as the Conſequence of that are broke looſe from all the *Ties* and *Obligations* of Conſcience, they can have no other Principle but Atheiſm to *warrant* their Actions; and when once they have abandoned all *Senſe* and *Remembrance* of God, ſo that he is not in all their Thoughts, they are in a fair forwardneſs to *Infidelity*. For tho as yet they do not actually *diſbelieve* his Exiſtence, ſo neither do they actually *believe* it; for how ſhould they actually believe *that* which they have no *Senſe* or *Thought* of; ſo that in this inſenſible State their Faith is concerned neither *one* way nor *t'other*, nor are they at all ſolicitous whether there *be* a God or *no*. Thus from their *profane Neglect* of Gods Worſhip Men naturally ſlide into an habitual *Senſleſsneſs* and *Incogitancy* of him, and from thence to *not believing*; and from thence to *diſbelieving* him is an *eaſie* and almoſt *neceſſary* Tranſition.

OF

OF the Truth of which the Age we live in will furniſh us with too many *ſorrowful* Inſtances. For as this Nation which hath been always remarqued for a *grave, ſerious* and *religious* Genius, was never ſo generally *tainted* with Atheiſm as now; ſo neither was it ever chargeable with ſuch a general Neglect of the Publick Worſhip of God, which for ſeveral Ages after the Reformation, was duly *frequented*, and devoutly *celebrated*, till by the Prevalence of our *reſtleſs* Sects and Factions, the Diſcipline of the Church was gradually *weakned*, and at laſt totally *deſtroyed*; in the happy Days before which the Families of each Pariſh went *hand in hand* together to the Houſe of God, and with *one* Heart and Voice celebrated his Praiſe and Worſhip; and to abſent ones ſelf *ordinarily* from the Publick Aſſemblies, was hardly conſiſtent with the *Reputation* of being a Chriſtian. By which means their natural *Senſe* and *Dread* of the divine Powers, being continually *awakened* and *revived*, they were not only *ſecured* by it from all Atheiſtical Impreſſions, but alſo *animated* and *excited* to a pious and ſober Converſation. But the ſpirit of Schiſm *prevailing* againſt the Power and Diſcipline of the Church, till it had uttterly *diſabled* it from

from reſtraining the Wantonneſs of that *crooked* and *perverſe* Generation; ſome incorporated themſelves into *ſeparate Communions*, and others under Pretence of ſo doing withdrew from the *Publick Aſſemblies* to the common Reſorts of *Idleneſs*, *Drunkenneſs* and *Debauchery*; and whilſt the *Maſters* took the Liberty of *Conſcience* to go to *Conventicles*, the *Servants* pretending to be of a different Perſwaſion aſſumed the Liberty of *Will* to go to *Taverns* and *Ale-houſes*; inſomuch that it grew a common Obſervation, that there have been more young People debauched on the *Lords Day* than all the *Week after*, whilſt under pretence of *joyning* with a different Communion, they have taken occaſion to *withdraw* themſelves from the Inſpection of their Parents and Maſters. And till once our Schiſms and Diviſions are *cured*, it will be impoſſible to *prevent* this ill Practice, unleſs we will be ſo unjuſt as to deny *that* Liberty of Conſcience to our Servants which with ſo much *Clamour* and *Confidence* we demand of our Governors. And thus by degrees *Profaneneſs* hath inſinuated it ſelf under the Covert of *Sehiſm*, and *Liberty of Conſcience* became a common Sanctuary for the licentious *Neglect* and Contempt of Gods Worſhip, till

till at laſt it grew ſo *common* and *faſhionable*, that it almoſt ceaſt to be *ſcandalous*. Yea, ſo far at length hath this *impious* Humour prevailed, that to *go to Church* and be *devout* is among too many Men grown a Note of *Diſgrace*, and the Character of a *Prieſt-ridden* fool; and a Man is hardly lookt upon as fit for *genteel Converſation*, that knows any other uſe of a Holy-day, but only to be at leiſure to *lie abed*, or to *Game* or *Drink* and *Debauch*; by which Neglect and Contempt of the Worſhip of God, that natural Senſe of him, which ſhould have been *quickned* and *cheriſhed* by it, hath been gradually *worn out* of Mens Minds; the Conſequence of which is, all *that* Atheiſm and Infidelity that overſpreads this preſent Age. For when once Men have *renounced* the Worſhip of God, and in Conſequence are *abandoned* of their natural Senſe of his Majeſty, they are upon the brink of Atheiſm, into which their own *vile* Luſts, whoſe Intereſt it is that there *ſhould* be no God, will eaſily *precipitate* them. But alas, how *ridiculous* as well as *impious* is it for Men to take occaſion from their own *Neglect* of Gods Worſhip, to renounce the *Belief* of his Being; what is this but to *tail* one folly to another, and to ſecond *Extravagance* with

Madneſs?

Madneſs? It would make one amazed to think that ever reaſonable Beings ſhould be ſo *beſotted*, as to live in a World over which an Almighty Being *preſides*, who ſees all their Actions, and in whoſe Hands all events are which concen them, and even the *everlaſting* Fate of their Souls; and yet take no more *notice* of him, pay no more *Reſpect* or *Veneration* to him, than if he were the mereſt *trifle* or moſt inſignificant *Cypher* in the whole Creation. But ſure when Men have been guilty of ſuch a *black* and *horrid* Impiety, one would think their wiſeſt Courſe for the time to come ſhould be to *repent* of it, and to endeavour to *compenſate* for their paſt Profaneneſs by the ſtrictneſs and Sincerity of their future Devotion; but for Men to proceed from *neglecting* Gods Worſhip to *denying* his Being, is to do *worſe* becauſe they have done *ill*, and thereby to *inflame* the Provocation, as if they were reſolved to render their Condition *deſperate*, becauſe they have been ſo *fool-hardy* as to render it *dangerous*.

AND thus I have given a ſhort Account of the common *Cauſes* of Atheiſm, which you ſee are all derived from Mens *Wills* and not from their *Reaſon*. For this I do moſt firmly believe, that the Arguments

ments of Gods Exiſtence are ſo *plain* and *convincing*, that no Man ever *was* or *can be* an Atheiſt without ſome inexcuſable fault in his *Will*.

SECT. II.

Of the inexcuſable Folly *and* Unreaſonableneſs *of* Atheiſm.

THE next thing I propoſed was to endeavour to *confirm* and *eſtabliſh* this great Principle of Religion, *viz.* the *Belief* of a *God*, by repreſenting the great *folly* and *unreaſonableneſs* of Atheiſm. In diſcourſing which I ſhall meddle no more than needs muſt with the *Proofs* and *Arguments* of a Deity, becauſe as I have ſhewed before, 'tis not for want of *Arguments* that Men turn Atheiſts, but for want of *Conſideration* and an *honeſt Will*; and that the *Byaſs* that carries them towards Infidelity is not in their *Underſtandings*, but in their *Wills* and *Affections*; that 'tis only their *Partiality* to their *Luſts*, that inclines them to Atheiſm; and that the Reaſon why they are ſo ready to *believe* that there *is* no God, is, becauſe they *wiſh* in their Hearts that there *were* none. To

eſtabliſh

eſtabliſh the Belief of a God therefore, I ſhall endeavour to repreſent the *folly* and *unreaſonableneſs* of Mens being partial on the ſide of Atheiſm, ſuppoſing it were *diſputable* whether there *be* a God or *no*; and this will evidently appear in the following Particulars.

1. The Atheiſt concludes againſt the *Dignity* of *Humane Nature*, and renders it not only *mean* but *ridiculous*.

2. He concludes againſt the very *Being* and *Well-being* of *Humane Society*.

3. He concludes againſt that which is the main *Support* and *Comfort* of Humane Life.

4. He concludes for *that* ſide of the Queſtion which is infinitely the moſt *unſafe* and *hazardous*.

5. He concludes for the unſafeſt ſide of the Queſtion upon the *higheſt uncertainties*.

6. He plainly *contradicts himſelf* in his *Concluſion*.

I. THE Atheiſt concludes againſt the *Dignity* of *Humane Nature*, and thereby renders it not only *mean* but *ridiculous*. For the chief *Worth* and *Dignity* of Humane Nature conſiſts in its Relation to *God*, wihout whom its *nobleſt* and moſt *excellent* Faculties are in a great meaſure *uſe-*

leſs

leſs and *inſignificant*; for if there be *no* God, the objects of our Five Senſes are the *ſole Entertainment* of our Underſtanding and Will, and we have no *other* uſe of theſe mighty Faculties, (which if there were any ſuch thing as an infinite *Truth* and *Goodneſs* are naturally capable of enjoying them) but only to *conſult* and *chooſe* the Gratifications of our *Senſe*, and the Pleaſures of this periſhing *Body*. For excepting *God* there is no ſuch thing in Nature as a *ſpiritual enjoyment*, no *Good* to be found, but what is prepared to entertain the boundleſs *Liquoriſhneſs* of our carnal Appetites; and had we none but ſuch as *theſe* to conſult for, our *Reaſon* which is the *Crown* and *Glory* of our Natures, would have nothing elſe to do but to *Cater* for our *Fleſh*, and we ſhould have an Underſtanding and Will to no other purpoſe, but to enable us to play the *Brutes* with more *Skill* and *Sagacity*. And indeed ſetting *God* aſide we are ſo far from having the advantage of Brutes by being *rational*, that we are rather ſo much the more *wretched* and *deſpicable* than *they*. For as for the Happineſs of *this* Life which wholly conſiſts of *ſenſual* Good, the Senſes and Appetites we have *in Common* with the Beaſts that periſh are ſufficient for the enjoyment of it;

it; and with theſe we might reliſh it as well *without* our Reaſon as *with* it; we might *Eat* and *Drink* and *Sleep*, and enjoy *all* the Pleaſures of a Brute with as much *Guſt* and *Savour* as we do now with our *Reaſon*. For if we *were* Brutes we ſhould do as Brutes *do*; we ſhould *weary* our ſelves no longer with *vain* purſuits, nor *vex* our ſelves with *fruitleſs* Expectations, nor *torment* our ſelves with the *fears* of a Diſappointment, but e'en take our Pleaſures when our Appetites *craved* 'em, and they freely *offered* themſelves to our Injoyment. And tho our *Reaſon* doth ſometimes *cook* the Injoyments of our Senſe, and give them a higher *Reliſh* and and *Luxury*, yet this advantage is very much out-weighed by the many *Regrets*, and *Remorſes*, and *ſtinging Reflections* it intermingles with our Pleaſures; So that had we only the Faculties of *Brutes*, I am verily perſwaded we ſhould more *ſincerely* enjoy the Happineſs of the *brutal* Nature; but to be ſure we ſhould bear our Miſeries with much more *Eaſe* and *Chearfulneſs*. For ſuppoſing there *is* no God, our Reaſon can afford us no ſolid ſupport under any Calamity; the main Arguments of Comfort, as I ſhall ſhew by and by, being derived from the Conſideration of *God* and his

his *Providence*; which being taken away, I doubt not but we ſhould bear our miſeries *without* our Reaſon much better than *with* it. For then we ſhould neither be *terrified* at the *approach* of them, nor *tormented* with *Deſpair* under them; then we ſhould neither *multiply* them with *falſe* Opinions, nor *inrage* them with *bitter* Reflections on the Cauſes of them; but whenever they happened, bear them as *Beaſts* do, without any other Pain or Uneaſineſs than what they neceſſarily *impreſſed* on our *Senſes*, which would render them a thouſand times more tolerable to us, than all our *Arguments* can do, ſuppoſing we have no *God* nor *Providence* to argue from.

So that were that *true* which the Atheiſt concludes for, *viz.* that there is no *God*, it would follow that *Reaſon* in a Man ſerves to no other purpoſe, but to render him more *wretched* and *deſpicable*. If there *be* a God indeed, our rational Faculties are of *excellent* Uſe; as having an Object *commenſurate* to their wideſt Capacities, and every way *fit* and *worthy* to *employ* and *exerciſe* them; an infinite *Truth* for our *Underſtanding* to dive into, and an infinite *Good* for our *Wills* and *Affections* to purſue and embrace. But if there be nothing to be enjoyed by us but what is

Carnal and *Senſual*, our Reaſon is ſo far from being our *Ornament* and *Perfection*, that it is the *Plague* and *Diſgrace* of our Natures.

FOR for any Nature to have more Faculties than what are neceſſary to its Happineſs, is *monſtrous*; and therefore had we nothing to enjoy but the Happineſs of *Brutes*, 'twould be a *Deformity* to our Natures to have the Faculties of *Angels*; becauſe theſe Faculties would be in *vain*, there being no *adequate* Object in the Nature of Things to *employ* and *entertain* them. So that were the Doctrine of the Atheiſt *true*, it would caſhier our Reaſon for a *vain* and *uſeleſs* Faculty; a thing that ſerves our Nature to little other purpoſe, but only to *vex* and *diſquiet* it. And what Man that hath any *Regard* or *Reverence* for himſelf, would ever be fond of a Belief that thus *ſinks* and *depreciates* him, and lays the Glory of his Nature in the *Duſt*? For if it be true that there *is* no God, it is as true that Man is a moſt *deſpicable Creature*, that his *Reaſon* upon which he ſo much values himſelf is a *frivolous* and *impertinent* Faculty; a Faculty that can ſerve him to no higher purpoſe than only to be a *Cook* and a *Taylor* to his Body, to ſtudy *Sauces* and *Faſhions* for it; and that while it *ſerves* him in *this*, *diſſerves* him in a thouſand

thouſand *other* Inſtances, in mingling his Pleaſures with *Gall* and *Wormwood*, with *Fears* and *Impatiences*, *Anxieties* and *Remorſes*, and in *aggravating* and *putting Stings* into his Griefs and Calamities. So that when all is done, the only thing that makes it *worth the while* for a Man to be *reaſonable*, is, that there is a Being of infinite Perfection to be *known*, and *loved*, and *imitated* and *adored* by him; and to *deny* the Exiſtence of this bleſſed Being, is infinitely to *undervalue* our ſelves, and to *eclipſe* the Glory and Dignity of our Natures. So that by being partial to *Atheiſm* we are partial to our own *Shame* and *Diſgrace*, and induſtriouſly conſult the *Reproach* and *Infamy* of Humane Nature; for the Devil himſelf cannot affix a blacker *Scandal* on our Reaſon than what is implied in this Aſſertion, that there *is* no God.

AND as it lays the greateſt *Reproach* upon our Nature, ſo it alſo renders us the moſt *Ridiculous* of all Beings. For there are certain Affections interwoven with Humane Nature, which if there be no God are ſhamefully *ridiculous*; ſuch as the *Dread of inviſible Powers*, the *Senſe of Good and Evil*, and the anxious Expectation of a *Judgment to come*; all which are ſo deeply *inlaid* in our Beings, as that with all our

Arts and Reaſoning we cannat totally *eraſe* them. And even the Atheiſts themſelves who have tried all poſſible ways of *extinguiſhing* them, have found by Experience that the *utmoſt* they can do is, to *damp* and *ſtupifie* them at preſent; but that in deſpight of them they will *revive* and *awake* again when *Death* or *Danger* approaches them. Now how *ridiculous* are theſe Affections in Humane Nature, if there be no ſuch Being as a God? For upon this Suppoſal we have *Paſſions* that have no *Objects* in the Nature of things, that have nothing in the World to *move* and *affect* them, but *wild Chimeraes*, *flying Dragons*, and *Caſtles in the Air*; and whereas all other Beings have *real* Objects in Nature correſponding to their ſeveral *Inſtincts* and *Affections* (for ſo the *Hare* hath a natural dread of a *Dog*, the *Sheep* of a *Wolf*, the *Mice* of a *Cat*, the *Toad* of a *Spider*, all the Objects of which dread have a *real* Exiſtence) Poor ſilly Man, ſuppoſing there is no God, naturally *trembles* at an *inviſible* Nothing, and is horribly *afraid* of the *Shadow* of an *Imagination*. So that if the Atheiſts Opinion were true, the *Ape* that looks pale at the ſight of a *Snail*, and flies as if he feared leſt that ſlow Creature ſhould overtake and devour him,

him, would be a great deal leſs *ridiculous* than *timorous* Man, whoſe Nature is thus *hagg'd* with *frightful* Imaginations of inviſible Powers and a Judgment to come.

AND what Man that hath any Reverence for the Humane Nature within him, would ever ſuffer himſelf to be *bribed* for an Opinion that doth not only *undervalue* but *deride* and *Ridicule* it. Should you hear your ſelf branded with a *contemptible* Character, or ranked among *Apes* or any ſuch *ridiculous* Animals, you would doubtleſs be ſo far from *courting* the Author of it, that you would *reſent* it as a great Affront, and think your ſelves obliged in honour to *return* the Provocation; and yet for the ſake of a few baſe *Luſts*, which are the *Shame* and *Scandal* of your Natures, you eſpouſe the Cauſe of Atheiſm, tho it *derides* and *affronts* you to your Face, and *ſtains* the Glory of your Natures with the moſt *contemptible* and *ridiculous* Character in the World.

II. THE Atheiſt concludes againſt the very *Being* and *Well-being* of *Humane Society*. For the Soul that *penetrates* through all Humane Society, and *compacts* and *unites* it in a regular Body, is Religion, or the *Senſe* and *Acknowledgment* of a Divine Power, without which all the Parts of the

Corporation of Mankind, like the Members of a *dead* Body, muſt neceſſarily *diſband* and *flye abroad* into Atoms. For a *form'd* Society which is an *united* Multitude conſiſts in the *Harmony* and *Conſent* of its Members mutually *united* by Laws and Agreements, and *diſpoſed* into a *Regular* Subordination to one another, neither of which can any Humane Society long continue without the *Belief* and *Acknowledgment* of a God.

FOR without this, in the firſt place, 'tis impoſſible that the Parts of any Society ſhould continue *united* by Laws and Agreements. For 'tis from the Belief of a God, that all the *Obligations* of Conſcience are *derived*; ſo that take *that* away and *theſe* muſt diſſolve; and when the Obligations of Conſcience are *diſſolved*, there is nothing but Mens *temporal Intereſts* can oblige them to *conform* to thoſe Laws and mutual Agreements, by which they are united to one another. And if it be their *Intereſt* only that obliges them to be *juſt* and *faithful* to their mutual Agreements, they will be equally obliged to be *unjuſt* and *unfaithful*, when ever it is their *Intereſt* to be ſo. So that this Principle which only obliges them to be *honeſt* while it is for their *Advantage*, will as effectually oblige them

them to be *Knaves* when ever the Caſe is *altered*; and things being reduced to this Iſſue, there remains no Foundation of *Truſt* and mutual *Confidence* among Men. For what can any Mans *Promiſe* ſignifie, if he be under no Obligation but *Intereſt*? To be ſure if it be *for* his Intereſt he will *do* what he *ſays* without any *Promiſe*; but if it be *not*, what Promiſe *can* oblige him? You will ſay it is his Intereſt to keep his *Word*, becauſe otherwiſe he will forfeit his *Reputation* for the future? But pray what *Reputation* can a Man have to *forfeit*, that owns no other *Law* or *Obligation* but his Intereſt? or who will ever preſume upon that Mans *Word* and *Engagement*, whoſe *avowed* Principle it is to be honeſt no longer than he can *gain* by it? Thus Atheiſm you ſee, reſolves all our *Obligations* into our worldly *Intereſt*, which is ſo *fickle* and *mutable* a Principle, ſo dependent upon *Chance* and the *Inconſtancies* of Fortune, that there is no hold to be taken of thoſe that are governed by it. For that which is their Intereſt to *Day* may be their Diſadvantage to *Morrow*, and if it ſhould *ſo* happen, they muſt ſteer a *contrary* Courſe, or elſe act *contrary* to their leading Principle. So that for Men to truſt each other upon this *fickle* Principle, is all one as to

relie upon the Constancy of a *Weather-cock*, which every contrary Wind turns to a contrary Position. And things being once reduced to *this* Issue, that Men can place no *Trust* or *Confidence* in one another, their Society will soon become their greatest *Plague* and *Vexation*. For *every Man* will be forced to stand upon his Guard against *every Man*, and keep himself *reserved* and *retired* within himself; till at last out of mutual *Distrust* and *Jealousie* of one another, they are forced to *withdraw* their Society, and to *live apart* in separate Dens for fear of being *intrapt* and *devoured* by each other.

AND as *Atheism* cuts in sunder those *Ligaments* of mutual *Trust* and *Agreement*, by which the Parts of Humane Society are united; so it also *dissolves* that Regular *Subordination* that is between them. *Plutarch* observes in his Treatise against *Colot*, πόλις ἂν μοι δοκεῖ μᾶλλον ἐδάφους χωρὶς, ἢ πολιτεία τῆς περὶ θεῶν δόξης ἀναιρεθείσης παντάπασι, σύστασιν λαβεῖν, ἢ λαβοῦσα τηρῆσαι, *i. e.* It seems to me more possible for a City to stand without Ground, than for a Commonwealth to subsist and continue without the Belief of a God; which is indeed the only *firm Foundation* whereup[illegible]*ment* and *Society* depends. For

if

If there *be* no God, what ſhould oblige any to *own* any *Superiour*, or *pay* any *Submiſſion*? And if his *Intereſt* be his only *Obligation* to his Superiours, when ever he can mend his Fortune by *Rebelling* againſt them, that very ſame Intereſt which at preſent *reſtrains* him from it, will with equal force *invite* him to it; nor will it ſignifie any thing that we are obliged to the contrary by *Oaths* of Fidelity and Allegiance; for if it *be* our Intereſt to be faithful to the Government, our own Prudence and Diſcretion will oblige us to it *without* ſuch Oaths as well as *with* them; but if it be *not* our Intereſt, and this be the only Principle that obliges us, no *Oath* or *Engagement* can hold us. So that in this State of things all the Security that Governors can have of their Subjects, is, that they *will* not Rebel when they are *not able*; but as ſoon as they think it *ſafe*, to be ſure they will think it *lawful*; which being once admitted will *undermine* the very Foundations of Government, and utterly diſſolve that *regular Subordination* by which Humane Society is *ſupported*. Whereas admitting that the Laws of our *Prince* are bound upon us by the Authority of a *Sovereign* Lord, who can render us eternally *happy* or *miſerable*, we are obliged

obliged to *obey* him by all that we can *hope* or *fear*, and have all the Engagements to *Loyalty* that the Reflections on a *happy* or *miſerable* Eternity can lay upon us. What a prodigious piece of *Folly* is it therefore for Men to embrace *Atheiſm* as their *Intereſt*, which doth thus directly tend to *deprive* us of all the *Comforts* of Society, by *involving* us in eternal *Confuſions* and *Diſorders*? For if once we take away *mutual Truſt* and *Government* from the *World*, *both* which have a neceſſary *Dependence* on the Belief of a God, we break all the *Harmony* of *Humane Society*, and convert it into a *Commonwealth* of *Canibals*. And what Man in his Wits would ever be found of an Opinion that proclaims *open War* with Mankind, and is pregnant with Conſequents ſo *fatal* and *deſtructive* to the World? Can we think it more *advantageous* to us that Atheiſm ſhould be *true*, than that Humane Society ſhould be *upheld* and *perpetuated*? or are the *Pleaſures* we reap from the *Luſts* which incline us to Atheiſm, comparably ſo valuable as the *Benefits* which acrue to us from being *formed* and *united* into regular Corporations? If *not*, how apparently do we engage againſt our own *Intereſt*, when we eſpouſe the *Cauſe* of *Irreligion*?

III. THE

III. THE Atheiſt concludes againſt that which is the main *Support* and *Comfort* of *Humane Life*. For while we are in this World, our *beſt* and *ſecureſt* Condition is expoſed to a world of *ſad* and *uncomfortable* Accidents, which we have neither the *Wiſdom* to *foreſee*, nor the *Power* to *prevent*; So far are we from being *ſelf-ſufficient* as to our worldly *Happineſs*, that there are a *thouſand* Cauſes upon which we depend for it, that are not in *our* Power to diſpoſe of; and in ſuch a State of *uncertainty* wherein we are continally *bandyed* to and fro, and made the *Game* of *inconſtant* Fortune, what *Quiet* or *Security* can we enjoy within our ſelves without believing that there is a *God* at the Helm, that ſteddily *over-rules* all events that concern us, and *ſteers* and *directs* them by the invariable *Compaſs* of his own infinite *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*. For conſidering how *poor* and *indigent* our Nature is, how we are fain to *ſeek abroad* and to go a *begging* from Door to Door for our Happineſs; how we depend upon *Chance*, and are *ſecure* of nothing we *poſſeſs*, or *deſire*, or *hope for*; how prone we are to be *alarmed* with the Proſpect of a *ſad* Futurity, and to *magnifie* diſtant Evils in our own *Aprehenſions*; how apt we are to *aggravate*

gravate our Miſeries by our Impatience and Deſpair, and to *pall* our Enjoyments by expecting more from them than their Natures will afford; conſidering theſe things, I ſay, which way can we turn our ſelves without a *God?* or where can we *repoſe* our reſtleſs Thoughts but in his *Providence?* Verily, could I be *tempted* to believe that there is *no* God, I ſhould look upon *Humane Nature* in its preſent Circumſtances as the moſt *forlorn* and *abandoned* part of the Creation, and wiſh that I had had the Luck to be of any *other* Species than that of a *Rational Animal.* For in the State I am I find my ſelf liable to a thouſand Dangers *againſt* which I have no *Sanctuary,* and *under* which I have no *Support,* if there be *no* God to govern the World; and having ſuch a diſmal Proſpect of things *before* me, and a buſie Mind *within* me that will be continually *working on* and *aggravating* the Evils of it, what can I do with my ſelf, or how can I enjoy my ſelf without a *God* to *relie* on? Upon the ſuppoſal that he *is,* and that he *governs* the World I can eaſily *relieve* my ſelf under the moſt *diſmal* Apprehenſions; I can *fairly* conclude and *ſafely* depend on it, that if I take care by my ſubmiſſion to Gods Will to make him my *Friend,* he will

will either *prevent* the Evils I apprehend, or *ſupport* me under them, or *convert* them to my *good*, either of which is ſufficient to ſet my *Heart at eaſe*, and inſtate me in a *quiet* Enjoyment of my ſelf. But now by *giving up* the Belief of a God, I *throw away* all theſe Conſiderations, and leave my ſelf utterly *deſtitute* and *ſupportleſs*. For what ſolid ground of *Support* can I have when I have no manner of *Security* either that the Evils I *dread* ſhall be *prevented*, or that I ſhall have a Proportionable *Strength* to *bear* them, or that I ſhall ever reap any *good* or *advantage* from them; without *which* Conſiderations every Evil that *threatens* or *befals* me is *pure unmingled* Miſery, againſt which there is no *Fence* or *Cordial* in *Reaſon* or *Philoſophy*. For ſuppoſe I ſhould argue with the ancient Moraliſts, that every ill Accident that befalls me is *fatal*, as being rhe Effect of ſome *neceſſary Cauſe* that is without my *Power* or *Diſpoſal*, and therefore 'tis unreaſonable for me to *grieve* at it; this will be ſo far from any way *mollifying* the Anguiſh of my Mind, that 'twill rather *inrage* and *inflame* it. For that my Calamity is *fatal*, ſo that it is not in my Power to *avoid* or *remove* it, is rather an *Aggravation* than a *Diminution* of it. Or ſuppoſe

poſe I ſhould reaſon as the ſame Moraliſts otherwhiles do, Why ſhould I *grieve* at the Evils that befal me, when alas! my *Grief* will be ſo far from *leſſening* them that 'twill rather *encreaſe* and *multiply* them, contribute new *Venome* to their *Stings*, and render them more *pungent* and *dolorous*; What a *faint* Cordial would it be to my *oppreſſed* Mind, to conſider that my Grief will but *augment* my *Load*? It is ſome *Eaſe* to a dejected Soul to *vent* its Griefs in *Moans* and *Lamentations*, which while ſhe ſeeks to *ſmother* in a *ſullen ſilence* like impriſoned Wind will breed a *Collick* in her Bowels; and is it not a ſad thing that I muſt deny my ſelf the *only* Solace of a *miſerable* Man, for fear of *augmenting* my Miſery? Again, ſuppoſe I ſhould reaſon thus with the ſame Authors, that Afflictions are *indifferent* things, and in themſelves neither *good* nor *evil*, but indifferently *improvable* into *Miſchiefs* or *Benefits*; this I confeſs were a *good* Argument ſuppoſing that the Affliction came from a *good God*, who can *extract* Good out of all our Evils, and render the *rankeſt* Poyſon *Medicinal*; but otherwiſe you will find 'tis but a *cold* Comfort to call your *Miſery* by *another* Name; For if there be no God to *temper* our Evils, and

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to *ordain* and *direct* them to *wiſe* and *good* Ends, we ſhall find in the iſſue they will prove themſelves *Evils* to us by what *ſoft* Name ſoever we may *call* them. Again, and to name no more, Suppoſe I ſhould reaſon thus, as theſe Maſters of Morality do, that to bear Afflictions with an unconcerned Mind is *brave*, and *manly*, and *generous*; that it is an Argument of a *great* and *Heroick* Mind, that hath raiſed it ſelf above the *reach* of Misfortunes; I readily *confeſs* ſo it is, ſuppoſing a Man hath *good reaſon* thus to bear his Afflictions, which is the *Queſtion* in debate; for then it is the Triumph of *Reaſon* over *Paſſion*, and an *illuſtrious* Inſtance of a *well fortified* Mind; but if we have *no* reaſon for it, all theſe glorious Words, *Generous*, *Brave*, &c. are nothing but *empty* Flaſh and *mere* Rodomontado. For for a Man to be *unconcerned* with Evils *without* reaſon, is ſo far from being generous and brave, that 'tis an Argument of his brutal *Stupidity* and *Fool-hardineſs*. But yet ſuppoſing that there is no *God*, *theſe* are the main Arguments we have to *ſupport* our ſelves under any Calamity. But alas, ſuch *real* Griefs of ours are not to be redreſs'd with *pretty* Sayings and *grave* Sentences, which tho they may look takingly at a *Diſtance*, will

will when we come to *apply* and *experience* them force us to pronounce as *Job* did of his Friends, *miſerable Comforters are ye all, and Phyſicians of no value.* So that were we left *deſtitute* of *God* and a *Providence*, and of all thoſe *bleſſed* Supports we derive from *thence*, we were of *all* Creatures the *moſt* miſerable. For in this ſtate of things we are compaſſed about with *Miſeries* and *Misfortunes*, and which without God is our *greateſt* Misfortune, we have a thing called *Reaſon* within our Breaſt, which is very *ingenious* in giving *Stings* to our *Miſeries*, and *vexing* us with *cutting* Reflections on them, but is not able to *qualifie* one Grief, or miniſter one dram of *ſolid Comfort* to us.

BUT when we lift up our Eyes to *God*, there are ſuch *vaſt* and *innumerable* Comforts flowing down to us from the Conſideration of his *Nature* and *Providence*, as are ſufficient not only to *allay* our *Sorrows*, but to *convert* them into *Joys* and *Triumphs*. For in him we behold not only an infinite *Wiſdom* that always *knows* what is beſt for us, but alſo an infinite *Goodneſs* that always *wills* what it knows to be ſo, and an infinite *Power* that always *does* what it wills; and whilſt we *ſee* and *conſider* this, there is nothing in the World

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can happen *amiſs* to us; Welcome *Pain*, welcome *Pleaſure*, welcome *Loſs*, welcome *Gain*, welcome *Diſgrace*, welcome *Honour*; for if we have but God our *Friend*, we may ſecurely *depend* upon it, that whatever befalls us is *beſt* for us.

WHO but a *Mad-man* therefore would ever eſpouſe the Cauſe of *Atheiſm*, or make it his Intereſt to *exclude* God out of the World? Indeed were he an *envious*, *malicious*, or *tyrannical* Being, that *repined* at the Happineſs of his Creatures, and watched all Opportunities to *plague* or *deſtroy* them, 'twere but reaſonable we ſhould endeavour to *quit* our Minds of the *Belief* of him; but to imagine it our *Intereſt* to believe there is no ſuch Being in the World as a *Good* God, that out of the immenſe *Benignity* of his Nature *eſpouſes* our Intereſt, and *takes care* of our Happineſs; that *underſtands* our Wants, and *compaſſionates* our Sufferings, and is *able* and *willing* to *ſupport* and *relieve* us; that requires *nothing* of us but what is for *our* good, and will infinitely *reward* us for doing *that* which is *beſt* for *our ſelves*; that *connives* at our Follies, and *pities* our Infirmities, and upon our unfeigned *Repentance* is ready to be *reconciled* to us, even when we *wilfully* and *preſumptuouſly*

provoke him; to Imagine it, I ſay, our Intereſt to ſhake off the Belief of ſuch a *bleſſed* Being as *this*, is the utmoſt *height* of Folly and *Madneſs*. For 'twere doubtleſs a thouſand times more tolerable for Men that the *Sun* ſhould be *pulled down* from the Firmament, and all the *Lights* of Heaven *extinguiſhed*, than that the *Belief* of a God ſhould be *baniſhed* from the World, the abſence of which would *over-ſpread* Mankind with ſuch a *diſmal Night* of Horror and Deſpair and Blackneſs of Darkneſs, as would render all *wiſe* and *conſidering* Men *aweary* of their Beings, and cauſe them to *wiſh* a thouſand times over, as for the *utmoſt* Good they could *deviſe* for themſelves, O that there were ſuch a Being as a *God* at the *Helm* of the World, that ſo the Affairs of it might be *ſteered* by an *infinite Power*, that is always *directed* by an *infinite Wiſdom*, and always *byaſſed* and *inclined* by an *infinite Goodneſs*! What then can be more *brutiſh* or *irrational*, than for the ſake of a few baſe Luſts that are the *Scandal* of our Nature, the *Bane* of our Society, the *Vexation* of our Lives, and the *Diſturbance* of all our Happineſs, to baniſh the *Belief* of a *God* from our Minds which is the *Foundation* of our Hope, and the only *ſupport* we can rationally *depend* on.

IV. THE

IV. THE Atheiſt concludes for that ſide of the Queſtion which is infinitely the moſt *unſafe* and *hazardous*. He who believes there *is* a God and acts accordingly, runs a very *ſmall* and *inconſiderable* Venture if in the iſſue of things he ſhould chance to be *miſtaken*; he only ventures the *diſſatisfying* a few *extravagant* Luſts, the *croſſing* ſome *irregular* Inclinations of his Nature, which if he had *gratified* would have *vexed* and *tormented* him, and *entangled* his Life with a thouſand *ill* Circumſtances; he only ventures ſome *Prayers* and ſome *Tears*, ſome *Watchings* and *Struglings* and *Contentions* with himſelf, and perhaps ſome *Reproaches* and *Perſecutions* for Righteouſneſs ſake, in Exchange for which he hath commonly a *healthful* and a *proſperous*, an *even*, *ſafe* and *contented* Life, a *quiet* and a *Triumphant* Conſcience, and a *joyous* Expectation of a bliſsful *Eternity* to come, which do outweigh all the *Incommodities* he ventures, all the *Pains* he undergoes, and all the *Pleaſures* of which he debars himſelf; and if in the Concluſion when he reſigns up his Breath, it appears that there is neither *God* nor *Heaven* nor *Hell*, his Condition will be altogether *as good* as the Atheiſts, with whom he will *ſleep* quietly in the *ſame* Duſt under the *ſame* everlaſting Inſenſibility.

BUT on the contrary, the Atheiſt by *believing* that there is no God and *acting* accordingly, runs the moſt *deſperate* Hazard in the World. For beſides that he *throws away* the main Support and Comfort of his Life, and lays himſelf *open* to all Contingencies, and *reſigns* up the *Satisfaction* of a good Conſcience together with the *Hopes* of a bleſſed *Futurity*, and all the innumerable *Joys* it abounds with; beſides all which, I ſay, he ventures to be *eternally wretched* and *miſerable* in the World to come, and expoſes himſelf *naked* and *defenceleſs* to the *unquenchable* Wrath of an *everliving God*; in Exchange for all which he hath no other *preſent* Compenſation, but the Pleaſures of a *riotous* and *tumultuary* Life, which do always *die away* in the Enjoyment, and are generally *daſht* and *ſophiſticated* with a thouſand very *ſad* and *uncomfortable* Circumſtances. And then if when he concludes this *preſent* Scene of Life, he ſhould find himſelf *miſtaken* in his Atheiſtical *Confidence*, and be unexpectedly *ſummoned* to the Tribunal of *that* God, whoſe *Being* and *Authority* he hath ſo peremptorily *denied* and *affronted*, and from thence be *tranſmitted* into a *diſmal* Eternity, there to *languiſh out* an everlaſting Exiſtence in *remedileſs* Woes and *unpitied*

pitied Lamentations; how would it *aſtoniſh* and *confound* him to find his confident Infidelity *baffled* by ſuch a woful *Experiment*, when inſtead of being *aſleep* in a ſtate of *Silence* and *Inſenſibility*, which was the thing he *depended* on, he ſhall find himſelf *wafted* to a ſtrange Shoar, and there *landed* among *Devils* and *miſerable* Spirits, in a ſtate of *endleſs*, *eaſleſs* and *remedileſs* Calamity! How *blank* and *forlorn* will the *Fool* look to find himſelf thus *fatally* miſtaken? and yet for all *he* knows *this* may be the *Reſult* and *Iſſue* of things. So that 'tis a very *ſmall* Hazard you ſee that *good* Men run, compared with *that* of the *Atheiſt*; for *ſhould* they be miſtaken, *their* Condition will be *as good* as *his* at the winding up of the Bottom; but if they *ſhould* not, it will be *infinitely better*.

It is ſtoried of a certain Hermite, who being retired from the World, led a very *ſevere* and *mortified* Life, that being one day met by two Cardinals, who were riding by with a very *Pompous* Equipage, was thus acoſted by them, Father, why ſhould you thus *mortifie* and *macerate* your ſelf by retiring from the *Glories* and *Pleaſures* of this Life? Suppoſe now that after all your Religious *Severities*, there ſhould be

neither a *God* nor a *future World* to reward you, would it not be *egregious* Folly in you thus to throw away *preſent* Enjoyments for *future* Nothings? To which the good Man preſently returned this Anſwer; But Sirs, ſuppoſe there *ſhould* be a God and a future World to *puniſh* you, would it not be egregious Folly in you, to run ſuch a *deſperate* Venture as you do of being *everlaſtingly* miſerable, for the ſake of a few *momentary* Honours and Advancements? Upon which, as the Story ſaith, the Cardinals being *convinced*, went away very *penſive*. And herein doubtleſs the honeſt Hermite was very much in the right. For were it a *Moot-point* whether there *be* a God or *no*, one would think in a matter of ſuch *unſpeakable* Moment, and where the Hazard on each ſide is ſo *infinitely unequal*, there is no Man in his Wits but would chooſe the *ſafeſt* ſide, and make *that* his Rule and Principle to live by. In this therefore the Atheiſt is juſtly chargeable with the moſt deſperate *Folly*, that whereas *at leaſt* he might be *ſafe*, if not *eternally Happy*, by *believing* that there *is* a God and *acting* accordingly, he rather chooſes to *venture* being *eternally Miſerable*, by *believing* there *is* none and *acting* as if there *were* none. In ſhort, this

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is the plain ſtate of the Caſe, if I *believe* that God *is* and *act* conſonantly, I ſhall be *ſafe* if he be *not*, and eternally *happy* if he *be*; whereas if I believe that he is *not*, I ame ſure to be *miſerable* for ever if he *be*, and am only *ſafe* from being miſerable for ever if he be *not*; and this being the Caſe, I leave any Man to judge which of the *two* is in Prudence more *eligible*, the *peradventure* of being *happy* for ever or of being *miſerable* for ever, ſuppoſing *both* to be *equally probable*. But

V. The Atheiſt concludes for the *unſafeſt* ſide of the Queſtion upon the greateſt *Uncertainties* in the World. One would think before a Man aſſented to a Concluſion, the Conſequence of which, if he ſhould be *miſtaken*, will be for ever *fatal* to him, he ſhould be ſo *wiſe* at leaſt as to *look* before he *leap*, and ſatisfie himſelf of the *Grounds* he *concludes* on, and not to give up his *Aſſent* upon every *doubtful* and *uncertain* Appearance. Now that part of the Queſtion which the Atheiſt *Aſſents* to, is of ſuch *mighty* Conſequence as that ſhould it prove *falſe* he is *loſt* for ever; and therefore one would think it concerned him to be very *ſure of his hand*, and take care that his Aſſent be *founded* upon very *ſtrong* and

undeniable Evidence, inſtead of which he *aſſents* at a *venture*, and grounds his *Belief* upon the moſt *ſandy* Foundations. For

1. He concludes for a *pure Negative*.

2. He concludes for it upon a *bare Poſſibility*.

3. He concludes for it againſt the *beſt Evidence* that the *Contrary* will *admit*.

I. HE concludes for a *pure Negative*. All Men are agreed that 'tis a very *hard* thing to prove a *Negative*; but to prove a *pure Negative* is *impoſſible*, unleſs the Exiſtence of the thing which it denies *implies* an *expreſs Contradiction*. 'Tis true, where a thing *viſibly* exiſts ſo that we can perceive as well how it doth *not* exiſt as how it *doth*, we may with as good Evidence *deny* as *affirm*; but as for *pure Negatives* which *deny* the very *Exiſtence* of ſuch things as may *poſſibly* exiſt, it is impoſſible to be *certain* of them without an *infinite* Underſtanding. For before we can be ſure that what is *not* in *our* Underſtanding is *not* in *Nature*, we muſt be ſure that whatſoever *is* in *Nature*, *is* in *our* Underſtanding, otherwiſe a thouſand things may *be* tho we do not *underſtand* them. As for Inſtance, Unleſs I were ſure that I had the perfect *Map* or *Geography* of ſuch a Country in my Head, it is impoſſible I ſhould be

be *ſure* that there is no ſuch *Town*, or *City*, or *Region* belonging thereunto; and ſo unleſs I were ſure that the *Coſmography* or *Univerſal Map* of *Nature* were perfectly *delineated* on my *Underſtanding*, I cannot *poſitively* affirm that ſuch or ſuch a Being doth *not* actually exiſt. So that as a great Divine of our own hath well obſerved upon this very Argument, after all that can be ſaid *againſt* a thing this will *ſtill* be *true*, that many things poſſibly *are* which we know *not* of, and that many things more *may* be than *are*. For unleſs our Underſtanding were *extended* to the whole *Compaſs* of Nature, there may be, for all we know, ten thouſand things in *Nature* which are not in our *Underſtanding*. So that concerning *pure Negatives* we can never be *certain*, unleſs the things which they deny be abſolutely *impoſſible*, and imply, in the very *Notion* of their *Exiſtence*, a *plain Contradiction*; which cannot be ſaid of the Exiſtence of *God*. For by God we mean nothing but a Being endowed with all *poſſible Perfections*; and to ſay that it is *impoſſible* that there ſhould be any ſuch Being as is endowed with all the Perfections that 'tis *poſſible* for a Being to be indowed with, is to aſſert *Poſſibilities impoſſible*, which is a Contradiction *in Terms*. Since therefore this

this *Negative* that there is *no* God, *denies* that which is *poſſible* in its Nature, and which implies not the leaſt *Shadow* of Contradiction, it is impoſſible, ſuppoſing it *were* true, for any *finite* Underſtanding to be *certain* of it. What Man in his Wits then would ever preſume to *deny* the Being of God, and to *Stake* his everlaſting Fate on it, when he knows beforehand that he cannot be *ſure* that his Denial is *true*, and that if it prove *falſe* he is loſt for ever! Alas! what is this but to *throw Dice* for our Souls, and to *venture* our Salvation on a *wild Uncertainty*?

II. THE Atheiſt concludes for a *pure Negative* upon a *bare Poſſibility*. One would think in a Matter of ſuch *infinite* Moment, Men ſhould at leaſt be ſo *wiſe* as not to conclude without *ſtrong Probabilities*, where they can find no *Certainty* to relie on; but ſo *deſperately* fool-hardy is the Atheiſt as to *ſuſpend* his *Faith*, and with that his *Salvation*, upon the *bare Poſſibility* that there *may* be *no* God. For when he is urged with thoſe Arguments of Gods Being, that are drawn from the *beautiful* Contrivance of the World, he hath no other way to *evade* them, but by endeavouring to demonſtrate how by the *neceſſary* Laws of *Matter* and *Motion*, things might

might poſſibly be *ſhuffled* together as they are without the *Agency* and *Direction* of a God; and yet even in *this* Attempt ſo many *inextricable* Difficulties preſent themſelves as have *puzled* and *confounded* the acuteſt Wits that were ever engaged in it; and while with all their *Art* and *Contrivance* they have been framing their *Hypotheſis* of the Exiſtence of this World *without* a God, they have been forced not only to *beg* ſome Principles, but alſo to *aſſert* others that upon Examination have been found *repugnant* to the Nature of things; and when all is done, if *both* were true, yet are they altogether *inſufficient* to ſolve a *thouſand Phainomena* in Nature. So that the utmoſt that the moſt *learned* and *inquiſitive* Atheiſt could ever pretend to, was to advance Atheiſm to a Grand *perhaps*, and by endeavouring to demonſtrate how things might *poſſibly* be as they are *without* a God, to prove that 'tis *poſſible* there *is* none; and yet when all is done, their moſt *ingenious* Endeavours are only a *Demonſtration* that the moſt *acute* and *witty* Men may be *miſtaken*. For what a *hopeleſs* kind of Task is it to ſhew how *that* may be the Effect of a blind *Chance* or *Neceſſity*, which hath all the Characters of a wiſe *Deſign* and *Contrivance* fairly imprinted on it? How

How is it poſſible for an *undeſigning* Chance to fit *Means* to *Ends*, or Ends to *Natures*, or ſo to *proportion* Parts to *one another* as to make a *comely* Symmetry in the *whole*, and this in *ten thouſand* Inſtances and not fail in *one*? How often, as the above-named Author from *Tully* diſcourſes, might a Man after he hath ſhaken together a Sett of Letters in a Bag, fling them out upon the Ground, before they would fall into an exact Poem, or make a good Diſcourſe in Proſe? And may not a little *Book* be as eaſily made by *Chance* as the great *Volume* of the World, in which there is ſuch an *inexhauſtible* Treaſure of rich *Senſe* and *Contrivance*? Or how long might a Man be in ſprinkling Colours upon a Canvas with a careleſs Hand, before they would happen to fall into the exact Picture of a Man? And is a *Man* eaſier made by *Chance* than his *Picture*? Why may we not as well conceive the moſt *regular* Building in the World to be *framed* by a *caſual* Concourſe of *Stone* and *Iron* and *Timber*, as that theſe *blind* and *rambling* Parts of Matter ſhould chance to place themſelves ſo *orderly* in the World, and to obſerve ſuch an *exact* Harmony and Decorum as if *they kept* Time with the Muſical Laws of ſome almighty Mind, that *compoſed* their

their Meaſures and *regulated* their Motions up and down in the Univerſe?

But granting the Atheiſt what he ſo *eagerly* tho *unſucceſsfully* contends for, that it is *poſſible* all this might happen by mere *Chance*, and conſequently that there *may* be *no* God in the World, would any Man in his Wits *found* his Faith upon a *mere Poſſibility*, when 'twill be as much as his Soul is worth if he ſhould happen to be *miſtaken*? It is *poſſible* that ſhould he throw himſelf from the Top of a high Steeple, the Air between may be ſo *condenſed* as to *bear* him up and *preſerve* him from being *daſht* in pieces by his Fall; but would you not think the Man ſtark mad that ſhould *venture* his Neck upon that *Poſſibility*? And yet it is a far more *deſperate* Venture that the Atheiſt makes, by thus *hazarding* his Soul to everlaſting *Deſtruction*, upon a *bare poſſibility* that there may be *no* God to *deſtroy* him.

III. The Atheiſt concludes againſt the *beſt evidence* that the *Contrary* will *admit*. For that there *is* a God we have as *full* Evidence as the Matter *could* bear if there *were* one, and to require *more* is *abſurd* and *unreaſonable*. For let us at preſent *ſuppoſe*, but for Argument-ſake, that there *were* ſuch an *infinite* Spirit in the World;

a Spirit that were as *wiſe*, and as *good*, and as *powerful* as *he* whom we call *God* is ſuppoſed to be; ſuppoſing, I ſay, there *were* ſuch a Spirit *actually* exiſting, we could not have *greater* Evidence of it than we have *already* that he *actually exiſts*. For we could not *ſee* him with our Eyes, becauſe we ſuppoſe him to be a *Spirit*, we could not *demonſtrate* his Exiſtence *à priori* or from any Cauſe, becauſe being the firſt Cauſe he muſt be *un cauſed* or *Self-Originated*. It remains therefore that the only Demonſtration we could give of his Being, is that which we call *à poſteriori* or from ſuch *ſenſible Effects* as can only be aſcribed to the *Power*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs* of ſuch a Being; and of ſuch Effects as *theſe* we have *infinite* Inſtances before us. For in ſum, we have all this *viſible World* about us, whoſe *changeable* Nature demonſtrates it to be the Effect of *ſome* ſuperior Cauſe, and whoſe unſpeakable *Vaſtneſs*, *Beauty*, and *Contrivance* argues it to be the Effect of ſome moſt *wiſe*, and *good* and *powerful* Cauſe. For as to the firſt, whatſoever is *changeable* cannot *ſelf-exiſt*, but muſt neceſſarily proceed from ſome *ſuperior Cauſe*; becauſe whatſoever *Self-exiſts* is *neceſſarily*, and whatſoever is neceſſarily is *always the ſame*; that which is *without* any

any Cauſe cannot *but* be, and that which is *thus* or *thus* without any Cauſe, cannot but be *ſo* or *ſo* for ever; and conſequently if the World were *of it ſelf* without any Cauſe, it would not only *be* neceſſarily, but alſo *be ſuch as it is* neceſſarily and unchangeably; but contrariwiſe we plainly perceive that it runs a *perpetual* Courſe of *Change* and *Alteration*, that its Parts are continually *altering* their Figure, and *ſhifting* their Places with one another, whereas if this *Part* were of it ſelf neceſſarily, as it muſt be if the *Whole* be ſo, it would neceſſarily be *where* it is and *what* it is eternally.

AND ſince the *Mutability* of this World argues it to be the Effect of *ſome* ſuperior Cauſe, I would fain know whether conſidering the *Vaſtneſs*, and *Beauty*, and *Contrivance* of it, it be not moſt reaſonable to attribute it to ſuch an *all-good*, *all-wiſe*, and *Almighty* Cauſe as we ſuppoſe God to be. For what leſs than an *infinite Power* can bear a due Proportion to ſuch a *vaſt* and *immenſe* World? Should you enter into a *vaſt* and *magnificent* Palace, and find no Creature in it, but a company of *Mice* or *Weaſels*, could you poſſibly believe that theſe *impotent* Vermin *built* it? And yet the building of the moſt Royal Palace

Palace doth not ſo much *exceed* the Power of theſe *weak* Animals, as the building of *this World* doth the Power of *any* Cauſe but a *God*. But then if we conſider the infinite *Number* of Beings in the World that are *capable* of Happineſs, and the *vaſt* Proviſions that are made to *entertain* them according to their *ſeveral* Capacities, we cannot but thence conclude that the *Power* which made them was *acted* by an *infinite Goodneſs*. Laſtly, if we conſider the *rare* and *admirable* Contrivance of the ſeveral *Parts* of the World; how *perfect* each one is in *its Kind*, how exactly *fitted* to each other, and what a lovely *Symmetry* and *Proportion* they all make in the *whole*, how can we otherwiſe imagine but that that *Power* and *Goodneſs* which cauſed it was *directed* by an *infinite Wiſdom*? So that the World is *ſuch* an Effect as openly *proclaims* its Cauſe to be a *God*; and if *this* Evidence of Gods Exiſtence will not *convince* Men, they are *impregnably* fortified againſt *all* Conviction; and if God ſhould carry them into thoſe *infinite Spaces* that are *beyond* the Limits of this World, and *there* command a *New* One into Being, while *they* ſtood *looking on*, and *ſaw* it ſpringing out of nothing, they might with as good reaſon conclude *that* World to be nothing

nothing but a *fortuitous* Concourſe of *inſenſible* Parts of Matter, as they now do that *this* is ſo. So that in fine, he that *denies* God after all theſe *Demonſtrations* which he hath given of himſelf, is out of the *reach* of Argument, and if he *purſue* his own *Principles*, can *never* be convinced by any *poſſible* Reaſons. And what a deſperate Folly is it for Men to embrace a Belief, which ſhould they be *miſtaken* draws after it *everlaſting Ruin*, when they have all the Reaſons to the *contrary* that the Matter is *capable* of? What is this but to *ſhut* their *Eyes*, and caſt themſelves *blindfold* on their own *Deſtruction*, and to reſolve to *wink hard* and believe *againſt* all poſſible Reaſons, that ſo they may ruin themſelves without any *Interruption*?

VI. and Laſtly, THE Atheiſt plainly *contradicts* himſelf in his *own Concluſion*. For by denying that God is, he neceſſarily denies the *Poſſibility* of his Being. For if he be *not*, it is impoſſible he ſhould *ever* be; becauſe *Eternity* of Being is included in the *Notion* of him. For when we ſpeak of *God*, we mean by him a Being that is *before* all Cauſes, and the *Cauſe* of all Cauſes, and that therefore *oweth* not his Being to any *prior* Cauſe, but doth *neceſſarily*, *independently*, and *eternally* exiſt.

So that if he be not *now*, he cannot be *at all*, because he must *begin* to be, which is contradictory to the very essential *Notion* and *Idea* of him. For if he should ever *begin* to be, he cannot be *Eternal*, and if he be not *Eternal* he cannot be *God*. So that to say God is *not*, is by necessary Consequence to say he *cannot* be at all; and yet by a God we mean at the same time *a Being that is endowed with all the possible Perfections that a Being is capable of*. Wherefore as by saying that God is *not*, we do by Consequence assert that it is *impossible* he should *ever* be, so by asserting that it is *impossible* he should *ever* be, we do in effect assert this gross Contradiction; that it is impossible *such* a Being should ever *be* as includes all the *Perfections* that are *possible* to a Being. Thus in the same Breath we pronounce that God *can* and *cannot* be, that 'tis *possible* he *is*, and yet *impossible* he *should* ever *be*. For by saying that he is a Being endowed with all the *possible* Perfections of Being, we expressly affirm that it is possible he *may* be; but by saying that there is *no* such Being *actually* existing, we do as expressly assert that it is *impossible* he should *ever* be. He therefore who asserts that God is *not*, doth by necessary Consequence assert this *express* Con-

Contradiction, *that it is impoſſible there ſhould ever be a Being as perfect as it is poſſible.* And when if there *be* a God, Mens eternal Fate depends but upon *believing* that he *is* and *acting* accordingly, what a monſtrous Folly is it for Men to *contradict* themſelves to *deny* him; what is this but to *ſtake* their Souls upon it, that the very *firſt Principle* of reaſoning is *falſe*, and put their Fate upon this *deſperate* Iſſue, that unleſs *both* Parts of a *Contradiction* prove *true*, they muſt *inevitably* periſh for ever?

And now having ſhewn you from what *malignant* Cauſes Atheiſm ſprings, and how deſperately *fooliſh* and *unreaſonable* it is in it ſelf, let us all endeavour by the *ſerious* Conſideration of what hath been ſaid, to *fortifie* our Minds againſt it. And ſince this Propoſition that *God is*, is the prime Foundation of *all* Religion, it concerns us all to uſe our utmoſt Diligence to *eſtabliſh* our Minds in the *firm* and *ſtedfaſt* Belief of it; and *this* we cannot fail to *do*, if we heartily *endeavour* it. For the Arguments of Gods Being do ſhine all round about us with ſuch a *clear* and *convincing* Light, that we need do no more than juſt *open* our *Eyes* to it, and *diſpel* thoſe miſchievous Cauſes from our *Wills*, that *hide* and *obſcure* it from our *Under-*

ſtandings. And when once we have throughly *ſetled* the *Belief* of Gods Being in our *Minds*, it will mightily *influence* all our Powers of *Action*; it will *invite* our Hope, and *alarm* our Fear, and *Addreſs* to every Paſſion in us that is capable of *Perſwaſion*, and be an *everliving* Spring of Religion within us; for God is an Object ſo infinitely *Great* in *himſelf*, and of ſuch infinite *Moment* and *Concernment* to *us*, that 'tis next to *impoſſible* we ſhould *firmly* believe that he *is*, without being *vigorouſly* impreſs'd with *religious* Affections upon the Conſideration of his *Being*.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Neceſſity *of acknowledging the* divine Providence *to oblige us to be* truly Religious.

THE main *Influence* which the *Belief* of a *God* hath upon the Minds of Men, proceeds immediately from the *Belief* of his *Providence*, without *which* we are

are no way *concerned* or *Intereſted* in him. For a *God* without a *Providence* is a *ſolitary* kind of Being that lives *alone* from the World, altogether *retired* within himſelf, and never *looks abroad* or any ways *intermeddles* with any thing *without*; and what have *we* to do with a *Being* that hath nothing to do with *us* or our *Affairs*, but lives *apart* from us in ſome *unacceſſible* Retirement, where neither *we* can go to *him* nor *he* come to *us*? So that it is by his *Providence* that all *Correſpondence* and *Intercourſe* between God and his Creatures is *maintained*; which being taken away, *he* is as nothing to *us*, and *we* are as nothing to *him*. For what doth it ſignifie to *us* that there is a certain *excellent* Being, called *God*, ſitting on the Top of the Heavens with his Arms *folded* in his Boſom, and who doth nothing there but *enjoy* himſelf in a *quiet* Contemplation of his own Perfections, without regarding any thing *without* him, or doing either *good* or *hurt* to the World? Such a God is nothing but a great *Cypher* in the World, that only makes a *glorious* Flouriſh, but is as *inſignificant* as *no* God at all. For to what purpoſe ſhould we *pray* to a God that is not at leiſure to *hear* us, or *hope* in a God that is not concerned to *help* us? What ſhould

move us to *love* a God that beſtows no *Good*, or to *fear* a God that inflicts no *Evil*, or to *obey* a God that hath no Regard of our *Actions*? Why ſhould we *thank* him if we *receive* nothing from him? For what ſhould we *praiſe* him if he be no ways *beneficial* to the World? And wherein ſhould we *imitate* him if he ſits *ſtill* and does *nothing*, and exerciſes neither *Wiſdom*, nor *Goodneſs*, nor *Juſtice*, nor *Mercy* towards any thing without him? All which *Perfections* of the Deity without a *Providence* are utterly *void* and *uſeleſs*. For his *Providence* is the great *Sphere of Activity* wherein he *exerciſes* and *diſplays* his Perfections, wherein his Power *executes* the Contrivances of his Wiſdom, and his Wiſdom *contrives* the Methods of his Goodneſs; ſo that without his *Providence* all his *Perfections* will ſignifie *nothing*. For what doth that Wiſdom ſignifie that *contrives* nothing? Or that Power which *doth* nothing? Or that Goodneſs that is *good for* nothing? Or that Juſtice which *diſtributes* nothing? And yet juſt ſuch *Cyphers* are all the Perfections of God ſuppoſe there is no *Providence* wherein to *employ* and *exerciſe* them. And if once we *vacate* and *extinguiſh* theſe Perfections of God which are the Graces which render him ſo *Sublime* and

and *Adorable*, what Reaſon can move us to *adore* and *Worſhip* him? For why ſhould we concern *our ſelves* with a God who concerns *himſelf* with no Body, and that either hath neither *Power*, nor *Wiſdom*, nor *Goodneſs*, or which to *us* is the *ſame*, makes no *uſe* of them? So that the *denial* of Gods *Providence*, you ſee, directly cuts in ſunder all the *Ties* of Religion, by rendering him an *inſignificant* Being to the World.

IN the Proſecution of this Argument I ſhall ſhew, Firſt, *What* of the *divine Providence* it is that is *neceſſary* to be *believed* in order to our being *truly Religious*. Secondly, What *Evidence* there is to *create* in us *this* Belief. Thirdly, The *Inſufficiency* and *Unreaſonableneſs* of the common Pretences to *Infidelity* in this matter.

SECT. I.

What it is we are to believe of the divine Providence.

IN General, it is not *ſufficient* that we believe *this* or *that* Part or Branch of it, but we muſt acknowledge the *Whole*; every *Part* whereof the *Whole* conſiſts being *pregnant* with very *powerful* Obligations to Religion. Now the *Whole* of *Providence* conſiſts in Gods continual *Conſervation*, *Poſſeſſion*,

Inſpection, and *Diſpoſal* of all things, and *Government* of the rational World. So that the *Whole* of it includes theſe five Parts or Branches,

1. Gods continual *Conſervation* of all things.

2. His continual *Poſſeſſion* of all things.

3. His continual *Inſpection* of all things.

4. His continual *Ordering* and *Diſpoſal* of all things.

5. His continual *Government* of the rational World. All which, as I ſhall ſhew, are highly *neceſſary* to be *believed* in order to our being *truly Religious*.

I. To oblige us to be *truly religious*, it is neceſſary we ſhould believe that God continually *upholds* and *conſerves* all things. That he alone is the great *Atlas* on whoſe almighty Shoulders the whole Frame of things *depends*. For tho the works of *Humane Art* do often ſtand many Ages after the Workmans Hand is *withdrawn* from them, yet the reaſon is becauſe there is *Something* between *them* and *Nothing*, *viz*, the *pre-exiſting Matter* of which they are formed; whereas the Works of God being all produced out of *Nothing*, have nothing between them, but that *creative Power* which produced them. And therefore as *Mans* Works would neceſſarily periſh were that

that *pre-exiſting Matter* taken away, which ſtands between *them* and Nothing, ſo *Gods* Works would neceſſarily reſolve into nothing, ſhould that *creative Power* be withdrawn which ſtands between *them* and nothing. In ſhort *pre-exiſting Matter* is the Baſis of *our* Works, and *creative Power* of *Gods*; and therefore as *our* Works muſt ceaſe to be were their *pre-exiſting Matter* withdrawn, ſo *Gods* Works muſt ceaſe to be were his *creative Power* withdrawn. So that 'tis the ſame almighty Power which *raiſed* the World *out* of Nothing that keeps it from *ſinking into* nothing; and that it *is* this Moment is as much the Effect of divine Power, as that it *was* that Moment when it was firſt created. For the World was no more able to give it ſelf the *ſecond* Moment of Being than it was the *firſt*, nor the *third* than the *ſecond*, and ſo on through all the *paſt* and *future* Moments of its Being. For *one* Moment of Being is as much as *another*, and therefore to give a *ſecond* requires the ſame Power as to give a *firſt*; and if ſo, then each *ſucceeding* Moment of the Worlds *Duration* and *Continuance*, muſt be derived from the Cauſe of the *firſt* Moment of its *Being*. So that the *Creation* and *Conſervation* of the World, is only the *ſame* Act *continuing* and *flowing* on

(like

(like a *Line* from a Mathematical *Point*) from the *firſt* Inſtant of its *Being* to the *laſt* Period of its *Duration*. And ſo the Scripture repreſents it; thus *Nehemiah* 9. 6. *Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou haſt made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens with all their Hoſts, the Earth and all things that are therein, and thou preſerveſt them all*; and *Acts* 17. 25, 28. *he giveth to all life and breath and all things, in him we live, and move, and have our being*; and *Heb.* 1. 3. he is ſaid to *uphold all things by the word of his Power*.

WHICH is a Truth of that vaſt *Importance* to Religion, that it is hardly conceivable how it can *ſubſiſt* without it. For while we look on our ſelves as Beings that are *independent* from God, that do live, and breath, and ſubſiſt of *our ſelves*, without any new *Supplies* of Being from *him*, why ſhould we *ſerve* and *worſhip* him? What reaſon have we to *truſt* in a Being from whom we expect no *Support*? Or to render *Homage* to a Being on whom we have no *Dependence*? So that by *diſbelieving* this Part of the *divine Providence*, we do in effect cut off all *Intercourſe* between God and our ſelves, and lay an *Imbargo* on Religion. For if we *depend* not on him, what have we to *do* with him? And if we

owe

owe not our *Lives* and *Beings* to his Power, what right hath he to *exact* our *Obedience*? But while we look upon our ſelves as Beings that *hang* upon him, and *derive* every Breath and Moment of our Beings from him, ſo that ſhould he *withdraw* from us that almighty Arm that *ſuſteins* us, and leave us to *ſubſiſt* of *our ſelves*, we muſt preſently *drop* into nothing, how can we forbear without infinite *Stupidity* and *Ingratitude* to devote *our ſelves* and all our *Powers* and *Faculties* to his Service? For what a *ſtupid* Wretch ſhould I be ſhould I not ſtudy to pleaſe *him* upon whom I know my *Life* and *Being* depends, and who merely by *withdrawing* his Hand from underneath me can let me *ſink* into nothing when he pleaſes; and what an *ungrateful* Wretch ſhould I be ſhould I refuſe to *honour*, *worſhip* and *obey* him, from whom I draw *every* Breath I breath and derive *new* life and Being every Moment?

II. It is alſo neceſſary we ſhould believe that God *poſſeſſes* all things; that he hath not *given away* this World from himſelf, and caſt it out of his own *Diſpoſal* as a common *Scramble* among Men; but that he hath *reſerved* to himſelf an *abſolute*, *unalienable* and *independent* Propriety in all that we *enjoy* and *poſſeſs*. For all things

owe

owe their Being to *him* as he is the *Creator* and *Upholder* of them; and therefore whatſoever *is* muſt neceſſarily be *his*, becauſe it *is* by his *Power* and *Providence*. And if *we* who act by the Power of *God* and can do nothing *without* him, may claim a Right to the Effects of our *Invention* and *Induſtry*, how much more may God who *contrived* and *produced* all things by his own *independent* Wiſdom and Power? For *our* Wiſdom and Power being *Gods*, he hath a *Sovereign Right* to all the *Effects* of them; but *his* Wiſdom and Power are abſolutely *his own* without Dependence on any *ſuperiour Cauſe*; and therefore whatſoever are the Effects of *them* muſt neceſſarily be *his* by a moſt *abſolute* and *independent* Propriety. And accordingly he is ſtiled *the poſſeſſor of Heaven and Earth*, Gen. 14. 19. and *Moſes* tells his People, *behold the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens is the Lords, the Earth alſo and all that is therein*, Deut. 10. 14. and *the Earth* ſaith the Pſalmiſt *is the Lords and the fulneſs thereof, the World and they that dwell therein; for he hath founded it upon the Sea and prepared it upon the Floods*, Pſal. 24. 1. and 50. 12. *and the Heavens* ſaith he again *are thine, the Earth alſo is thine; as for the World and the*

the fulneſs thereof thou haſt founded them, Pſal. 89. 11.

GOD therefore being the *Supreme Proprietor* of the World, there is nothing can be juſtly *ours* but by *his* Will and Grant; and nothing can be ours by *his Will*, but what is *honeſtly* and *juſtly* ours. So that for us to *ſeiſe* upon any Part of the World by *Fraud*, or *Violence*, or *Oppreſſion*, is to *treſpaſs* upon God and *invade* his Property, and to *tear* his *World* from him *againſt* his Will. Thus whatſoever we poſſeſs by *Wrong*, we poſſeſs as *Robbers* and *Invaders* of God, and whatſoever we enjoy by *Right*, we enjoy as *Tenants* to the great *Landlord* of the World; and without *owning* and *acknowledging* this we cannot be *truly Religious*. For if the World be not *his*, why ſhould we *pray* to him for what we *want* of it, or *praiſe* him for what we *enjoy*? Why ſhould we patiently *ſubmit* to his Diſpoſal when he *deprives* us of what we *have*? Or thankfully *acknowledg* his Goodneſs when he *ſupplies* us with what we *need*? Why ſhould we employ our *Poſſeſſions* in *his* Service, or think our ſelves obliged to *return* him any Part of them in *pious* or *charitable* Works? In a word, why ſhould we be *contented* with a *ſmall* ſhare, and abide by that *unequal* Diviſion of things that

that is made in the World, and not endeavour to *increaſe* our own poor Heap by *pilfering* from other Mens that are ten times bigger than ours? Whence are *theſe* Obligations but from this *Suppoſal*, that God is the ſupreme *Proprietor* and *Poſſeſſor* of all things; which being denied there remains no *ſolid* Foundation of Reaſon for any of theſe *great* and *neceſſary* Duties of Religion.

III. To oblige us to be truly *religious* it is alſo neceſſary we ſhould believe that God is *preſent* with and *inſpects* all things; that his divine Subſtance is *diffuſed* through and *circumfuſed* about all things, ſo as to *penetrate* them *within* as an univerſal *Soul*, and *contain* them *without* as an univerſal *Place*. For ſo the Jewiſh Doctors are wont to call God *Hamakôm*, that is to ſay, the *Place* or *Continent* of all things; becauſe all things are *incompaſſed* by him, and do live and move *within* his infinite Boſom. For ſo in Scripture the divine Subſtance is deſcribed, as ſpreading it ſelf *through* and *a round* the World, even to the utmoſt *poſſibility* of *Extenſion*. *Whither* ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *ſhall I go from thy Spirit, or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence? If I aſcend up into Heaven thou art there, if I make my bed in Hell, behold thou art there;*

if

if I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea, even there ſhall thy Hand lead me and thy right Hand ſhall hold me, Pſal. 139. 7, 8, 9, 10. And *Behold,* ſaith *Solomon, the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee,* 1 Kings 8.27. yea *do not I fill Heaven and Earth? ſaith the Lord himſelf,* Jer. 23.24.

Now tho Gods *Omnipreſence* be *ſtrictly* an Attribute of his *Eſſence,* and not a part of his *Providence,* yet 'tis *ſuch* an Attribute as *includes* his *univerſal Providence,* and without ſuppoſing of which an univerſal Providence can *hardly* be conceived. For if he *co-exiſts* and be *preſent with* all things, he muſt be ſuppoſed to *operate* upon them; becauſe where ever *he* is, his infinite Wiſdom and Power and Goodneſs *are*; which in their own Nature are ſuch *active* Perfections as cannot be preſent where ſuch a world of things are to be done, and *ſit ſtill* and *do nothing.* For how can we conceive that infinite *Wiſdom* ſhould be preſent where a world of things are to be *ordered,* and yet *order* nothing? That infinite *Power* ſhould be preſent where a world of things are to be *done,* and yet *do* nothing? Or that infinite *Goodneſs* ſhould be preſent where a world of *good* is to be done, and do *no good* at all?

Such

Such an *idle, restive* Presence as this, is utterly inconsistent with such *active* Perfections. So that the *Omnipresence* of an infinite *Power* and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* necessarily supposes an *universal Providence*, and *without* such an Omnipresence an universal Providence can hardly be conceived. For how can God be present by any *Power*, or *Virtue* or *Efficacy* of his Nature, in any Place from whence the real *Substance* of his *Divinity* is excluded? How can he operate by his own immediate *Efficiency* where he is *not*? Or extend his divine *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* over all things, except his divine *Substance* in which these Attributes *are*, be *co-extended* with them. Every Agent must *be* where it *acts*, because it *acts* from its *Being*, and it is as possible for that which is *not* to *operate*, as for that which *is* to operate where it is *not*; and hence *Socrates* being asked how it was possible for *one* God to order *all* the Affairs of the World? returns this Answer, τοσοῦτον καὶ τοιοῦτόν ἐστι τὸ θεῖον ὥσθ' ἅμα ἅπαντα ὁρᾶν καὶ πάντα ἀκούειν καὶ τὰν ταχοῦ παρεῖναι καὶ ἅμα πάντων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, *i. e.* God is so *great* and *vast* a Being, as that he *hears* and *sees* all things *together*, and is present *every where*, and takes care of all things at the *same time*.

Thus

Thus Gods *Omnipreſence*, you ſee, doth *ſo* include his *univerſal Providence* that *with* it 'tis *neceſſary* and *without* it *inconceivable.*

AND then from his Preſence *with* all things, neceſſarily follows his Inſpection *of* all things; becauſe where ever *he* is, his *infinite Knowledg* is, which is *inſeparable* from his Being; and were ever his infinite Knowledge *is*, it muſt neceſſarily have a *through* Proſpect of all things round about him, ſo that nothing can be *concealed* from its *Inſpection.* For ſo the Scripture aſſures us that *the Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth*, 2 *Chron.* 16. 9. and that *the Eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and good, Prov.* 15. 3. and in a word, that *all things are open and naked to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb.* 4. 13.

BOTH which are Truths of *vaſt* Importance to *Religion.* For while Men look upon God as a Being that dwells at a *great Diſtance* from them, they will be ready enough to conclude *Procul à Jove procul à Fulmine*, that being *far off* from him, they are out of his *reach*, and beyond the *Danger* of his *Thunderbolts*; and that he is too far *removed* from them either to *ſuccour* them when they *want* his *Aid*, or to *puniſh*

them when they *deſerve* his *Diſpleaſure*; which muſt needs extinguiſh both their *Hope* and *Fear*, which are the Maſter-Springs of their Religion. And tho we ſhould believe him to be *preſent* with us, yet unleſs we alſo believe that he hath a *full Inſpection* into all our *Actions* and *Affairs*, we ſhall have no Regard to him. For if he *ſees* noti nto our Affairs, how can he *ſuccour* and *relieve* us? And if he cannot relieve us, to what end ſhould we *hope* in him, *depend* upon him, or *pray* to him? And unleſs he hath a *perfect* Inſight into all our Actions, how ſhould he *reward* or *puniſh* us; and if he cannot *reward* us what ſhould *encourage*, if he cannot *puniſh* us, what ſhould *terrifie* us to our Duty to him? But if we look upon him as a Being that is always *with us*, and *where ever* we are *ſurrounds* us wirh his boundleſs Preſence; that *includes* and *penetrates* every part of our Subſtance, *ſees* into our *inmoſt* Thoughts and Purpoſes, and *ranſacks* every *Corner* of our Souls with his *all-ſeeing Eye*, and hath a *through* and *perfect* Proſpect of all our *Affairs* and *Concerns*, we cannot without infinite *Force* to our Reaſon forbear *fearing* and *reverencing*, *ſerving* and *adoring* him.

IV. To

IV. To faſten the Obligations of Religion upon us it is alſo neceſſary that we *believe* that God continually *orders* and *diſpoſes* of all things; that he is the *Spring* of all the Motions of this great *Machine* of the World, that ſets every *Wheel* and *Cauſe* agoing, and by his all-commanding Influence *maintains, directs* and *over-rules* their Motions; and that there is nothing happens in the World, whether by *Nature*, or *Chance*, or *Deſign*, but by his *Ordination* and *Diſpoſal*; that even thoſe *natural Cauſes* which are neceſſarily *determined* to ſuch *particular* Courſes and Effects, are *influenced* and *conducted* by him, and that whenſoever they *ſtray* from their Courſes, *ſuſpend* or *precipitate* their Motions, or move *counter* to their natural Tendencies, it is by his *Order* and *Direction*; that 'tis he who *drives* and *guides* the heavenly Bodies, *impreſſes* the Degrees and *chalks out* the Paths of their Motions, and by his own Almighty Hand *turns round* thoſe ſtupendous Wheels in a perpetual Revolution. For ſo the Scripture tells us that *he makes his Sun to ſhine upon the good and bad, Mat.* 5. 45. that it is at his *Beck* and *Command* that thoſe vaſt Bodies of Light *exhale* the Vapours of the Earth and Sea, and *diſſolve* them down again in *Hail,*

and *Rain* and *Snow*. For ſo we are told that 'tis he *who covers the Heavens with Clouds, and prepares the Rain for the Earth; that ſends forth his Commandment unto the Earth, and giveth Snow like Wool, and ſcattereth the hoar Froſt like Aſhes, and caſteth forth his Ice like Morſels, and ſendeth forth his Word and melteth them, and cauſes the Wind to blow and the Waters flow*, Pſalm 147. 8, 15, 16, 17, 18. that *the Fire, and Hail, and Snow, and Vapours, and ſtormy Winds do fulfil his Word*, Pſalm 148. 8. And in a word, that 'tis by his *Order* and *Influence* that the Earth ſends up its *Sap* into the *Seeds* and *Roots* of Herbs, and Corn and Plants, and cauſes them to *ſpring* and *grow*, and that all Animals do *propagate* their Kind, and ſtill *repleniſh* the Store-houſes of Nature; for ſo we are told that *he cloaths the Graſs of the Field, and arrays the Lillies in all their glory*, Mat. 2. 28, 29, 30. and that *he cauſes the Graſs to grow for the Cattel, and Herb for the uſe of Man, that he may bring forth Food out of the Earth*, Pſal. 104. 14.

AND then as for *fortuitous* and *caſual* Events, which depend upon *Accidental* and *irregular* Cauſes, as a Mans being *hit* with an Arrow let fly *at random*, or *brained* with a Stone falling from the Top of an Houſe,

Houſe, we muſt believe that they are all *ordered, directed,* and *over-ruled* by God; ſo as that to *him* there is nothing *caſual* or *contingent*; and tho there are many things happen of which there was no *Neceſſity* in their *immediate Cauſes,* yet do they as neceſſarily depend upon the *Will* and *Power* of the *firſt Cauſe* of all, as the *Riſing* and *Setting* of the Sun, and *Ebbing* and *Flowing* of the Sea. So that how *fortuitous* ſoever theſe things may be in reſpect of the *Deſign* and natural *Tendency* of *ſecond Cauſes,* yet none of them ever happen beſides the *Purpoſe* and *Intention* of God, who *foreſees* and *deſigns* them before they come to paſs, and *directs* and *levels* them to his own moſt *wiſe* and *holy* Ends and Purpoſes. For ſo the Arrow which the Soldier let fly *at Random* was levelled by God at *Ahabs* Breaſt, ſo that his Death was *Chance* in reſpect of the *Soldier* who ſhot the Arrow, but *Deſign* in *God* who *directed* it; and accordingly, *Prov.* 16. 33. we are told that *the Lot is caſt into the Lap, but the whole diſpoſing thereof is of the Lord.* And ſo in the Caſe of *Chance-Medley* when a Man *accidentally* kills another without any *Deſign* or *Intention,* tho it be mere *Accident* in *him,* 'tis *Council* and *Deſign* in *God,* who, as the Scripture expreſſes it, *delivers the*

Man he ſlays *into his Hand, Exod.* 21. 13.

And then Laſtly, As for thoſe Events which happen by the *Deſign* of *free* and *rational* Agents, it is neceſſary we ſhould believe that they are *all over-ruled* by God too; that whatever befalls us in this World whether it be by the *good* or *ill* Deſign of Men or Angels, is for *good*, and *juſt*, and *holy* Ends, either *permitted* or *determined* by the ſovereign Diſpoſer of all *Events*; ſo that without his *wiſe* Permiſſion or Determination, neither *Angels*, nor *Men*, nor *Devils* can do us either *good* or *hurt*; that every *good* thing we receive from *them*, only paſſes to us through *their* Hands from *God*, and that *they* are only the *Channels* and *Conveyances* of the overflowing Streams of his infinite Bounty; and that when ever we ſuffer any *ill* from them, *they* are but the *Rods* in *Gods Hand* wherewith he *chaſtens* and *corrects* us; that he hath the *over-ruling* Diſpoſal of all the Ills which they *inflict* upon us, and can render their *Stings* a Sovereign *Balm*, and their *rankeſt* Poyſon *Medicinal* to us; ſo that their *Malice* being in *Gods* Diſpoſal, can effect nothing but what *he* will have it; and if it doth us *hurt* 'tis his *Executioner*, but if he pleaſes it ſhall do us *good*, and like

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Leaches applied by a skilfull Phyſician, ſhall *draw* away our *Diſeaſe* while it is *ſucking* our *Blood.* For ſo God made the *Malice* of *Joſeph's* Brethren the means of his *Advancement* in *Egypt*; and by the *Covetouſneſs* of *Judas* and *Cruelty* of the *Jews* advanced the holy Jeſus to his own *right Hand*, and *executed* his Purpoſe to *redeem* Mankind. Thus God *over-rules* the Actions of Men, and when he pleaſes *directs* them quite *contrary* to *their* Intentions; for *the way of Man*, ſaith the Prophet, *is not in himſelf, it is not in Man that walketh to direct his ſteps*, *Jer.* 10. 23. It is the *Man* that *walks* and *acts*, but it is *God* alone that *leads* his Way, and *directs* his Actions to what End he pleaſes.

ALL which it is *neceſſary* we ſhould *believe* in order to our being *truly religious.* For while we look upon God as a *Foreiner* to the World, that hath altogether *retired* himſelf from the *Affairs* of it, and *abandoned* it to the Diſpoſal of blind *Chance* or *Neceſſity*, he muſt ſtand for a *Cypher* in our *Eſteem*, and ſignifie no more to us than the *Emperor* of the *World in the Moon*, who for all we know may be a *glorious* and *puiſſant* Prince, but is ſo far *removed* from *us* and our *Affairs*, that he can do us neither *good* nor *hurt.* And if God inter-

meddle not with thoſe *Goods* and *Evils* which happen *here below*, what doth he ſignifie to *us* who live *apart* from him in *another World*, from which he is wholly *retired* and *withdrawn*? But if we *firmly* believe that there is nothing *befalls* us, whether it be in the Courſe of *Nature* or by *Chance*, or *Deſign*, but by his *Order* and *Direction*, we muſt lay aſide our *Reaſon* and *Humanity*, if for every *Good* we *want* or do *receive*, we do not apply our ſelves to him with *humble*, and *ſubmiſſive*, *thankfull* and *ingenuous* Minds; and if under every *Evil* that we *feel* or *fear*, we do not *reſign* up our *Wills* and *lift* up our *Eyes* to him, as to the ſole *Arbitrator* of our *Fate*. For *where* ſhould we *pay* our *Thanks*, or *whence* ſhould we *expect* our *Supplies* and *Deliverances*, but *to* him who is the *Fountain* of all *Good*, and *from* him who is the ſupreme *Moderator* of all *Events*? Who is there in *Heaven* or *Earth* whom we are ſo much *concerned* to *pleaſe*, and ſo much *obliged* to *acknowledge* and *ſubmit* to, ſo much *engaged* to *truſt* to and *rely* on, as him who hath all our *Fortunes* in his *Hands*, and the abſolute *Diſpoſal* of every thing in which we *are* or *may* or *can* be any way *intereſted* or *concerned*? So that the *Belief* of Gods over-ruling *Providence* hath every

every *Link* of our Duty *faſtened* to it in a *ſtrong* and *rational* Concatenation, and if it be *looſened* from *this* Principle, the whole *Chain* muſt neceſſarily fall *in ſunder*.

V. and Laſtly, To *oblige* us to be *truly religious* it is alſo neceſſary we ſhould *believe* that God is the *Supreme Governor* of the *rational World*; which is a *diſtinct* Branch of Providence from the *former*. For *all* things whatſoever are ſubject to Gods *Order* and *Diſpoſal*, but in *ſtrictneſs* of Speech 'tis only *rational Beings* that are ſubject to his *Government*. For Government ſuppoſes *Laws*, and Laws *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, of which *rational Beings* alone are *capable*, they alone having the power to *deliberate*, and upon Deliberation to *chooſe* what is *good* and *refuſe* what is *Evil*, without which no Being can *deſerve* either to be *rewarded* or *puniſhed*. So that the *Government* of God in ſtrictneſs of Speech, reſpects only the *rational World* conſiſting of *Angels* and *Men*.

As for the *Government* of *Angels* 'tis impoſſible we ſhould underſtand any *more* of it than what God hath *revealed*; becauſe tho *they* converſe with *us* and our *Affairs*, yet *we* do not converſe with *them*; our *Spiritual Nature* by which we are near

allied

allied to them being *ſhut up* in *Matter*, which like a *Wall of Partition* divides us from them, and *hinders* us from *looking over* into *their* World, and from *ſeeing* their *Nature* and *Operations*, and *ſurveying* their *Polity* and *Government*. Indeed *ſo far* as we underſtand their *Natures*, we may eaſily underſtand the *Laws* by which God *Governs* them; becauſe we know Gods *Laws* are always adapted to the *Natures* of things; and conſequently ſince we know that they are *rational* Creatures, we may conclude from thence, that whatſoever is *fit* and *decorous* for rational Creatures, as ſuch, they ſtand obliged to by the *Law* of their *Natures*. But ſince there are particular *Powers* and *Properties* in their Natures which we underſtand *not*, 'tis impoſſible we ſhould underſtand all the *particular* Laws by which they are Governed. Only thus much in general we *know*, that the whole Order of *Angelical Beings* were from the firſt Moment of their Creation ſubjected to *Laws* fitted to their *Nature*; by which *natural* Laws they ſtood *obliged* to *obey* their Creator in all his *poſitive* Commands and Inſtitutions; and that *theſe* Laws whatſoever they were both *natural* and *poſitive* were eſtabliſhed in *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, by which if they

conti-

continued *obedient* they were to continue for ever in their moſt *bliſsful* Ranks and Stations; but if they *rebelled* were immediately to be baniſhed thence into everlaſting *Wretchedneſs* and *Miſery*; that a *certain Order* of theſe *Angelical Beings*, excited either by their *Pride*, or *Envy*, or *ſenſual Affection*, did under their Head or Chieftain *revolt* from God by *tranſgreſſing* ſome *natural* or *poſitive* Law, for which they were *expelled* the *high* Territories of Happineſs, and *driven* into theſe *lower* Parts of the World, where under the Prince of their Rebellion they have ever ſince *waged War* againſt *God* and *Man*; that in this ſtate of War they are under the *Reſtraint* of Gods *almighty* Power, who ſets *Bounds* to *their* Power and Malice which it *cannot* paſs, and *determins* it to what *Ends* and *Purpoſes* he pleaſes; employing it ſometimes to *try* and *chaſten* good Men, ſometimes to *execute* his Wrath upon the *Children of Diſobedience*, and ſometimes again letting it *looſe*, merely to *diſplay* his own almighty Power in its *Defeat* and *Overthrow*; in which State they are reſerved as Priſoners *at large* to the *Judgment* of the *great* Day, whereby together with *wicked men* they ſhall be *ſentenced* and *confined* to everlaſting *Flames* and *Darkneſs*; that

that the *good* Angels in *reward* of their *conſtant* Obedience are *continued* and *fixed* in a moſt *bliſsful* Condition, in which they enjoy the *conſtant* Smiles of God, and the *unſpeakable* Pleaſure of being *entirely reſigned* to his Will, who upon all Occaſions ſends them to and fro the World, as the great *Meſſengers* and *Miniſters* of his Providence, to *Miniſter* to the Recovery of *recoverable* Sinners, and to *pour* out the *Vials* of his *Wrath* upon the *obſtinate* and *unreclaimable*; to *aſſiſt*, *protect* and *comfort* good Men while they *live*, and when they *depart* from hence to *conduct* their *Spirits* through the *aery Territories* of the *wicked* Angels into thoſe *bliſsful Manſions* that are *prepared* to receive them till the *Reſurrection*; at which time their Part will be to *ſummon* and *gather* both the *good* and *bad* before the Tribunal of Chriſt, to receive their *final* Sentence to everlaſting *Weal* or *Wo*.

THIS is the *main* of what we know concerning Gods *Government* of *Angels*; the *ſincere* Belief of which will be of vaſt Advantage to us in the *whole* Courſe of our Religion. For ſince there is ſuch a mighty *Colony* of *evil* Angels *roving* about the World, *watching* all Opportunities to lay *Snares* in our Way, and to *tempt* us into their *Revolt* and *Ruin*; and ſince their *Deſign*

ſign in tempting us *now*, is only to get us into their *Power*, that ſo they may *torment* us *hereafter*, how much doth it concern us to *guard* and *defend* our ſelves againſt their evil *Motions* and *Suggeſtions*, leſt by *complying* with them we give them opportunity to *train* us on from *one* degree of Wickedneſs to *another*, till they have made us *provoke* the Almighty to *cut* us off, and *abandon* us for ever to their *Rage* and *Fury*; and ſince they are all of them under his *Reſtraint*, and can proceed no *farther* in their *miſchievous* Deſigns againſt us, than *he* lets looſe his Chain to them, how ſhould this encourage us manfully to *ſtruggle* and *contend* againſt them; ſince if we do, we may *depend* upon it, that *God* in whoſe Power *they* are, will either *command* them *off*, or at leaſt not *permit* them to *over-power* us with Temptation. And ſince by Gods Permiſſion there are great *Flocks* of *good* Angels always *hovering* about us, to *guard* us againſt thoſe *malignant* ones, and to *prompt* us to *good*, as *they* prompt us to *evil*, and with their *holy* Inſpirations to *countermine* their *impure* Suggeſtions, how much doth it import us to *cheriſh* and *reverence* every pious *Thought* and *Motion*, ſince for all we know it may be the *Whiſper* of ſome *Angel of God*, who by *theſe* and

and *ſuch like* holy Injections is now *ſtrugling* with the Powers of Darkneſs, to *reſcue* our Souls out of *their* hands. And ſince theſe *bleſſed* and *benevolent* Spirits do by Gods Appointment *pitch* their *Tents* about *good* Men while they *live*, and *convoy* them *ſafely* to the *Seat* of the *Bleſſed* when they *die*, how ſhould this *encourage* bad Men to be *good*, and *good* Men to *perſevere* in Well-doing; ſince they *place* and *continue* themſelves under the bleſſed *Patronage* of Angels, to be *conducted* ſafely by them through this *perillous* Sea to the *calm* Regions of *eternal Light*? Thus the Belief of Gods *Government* of *Angels*, ſo far as he hath thought good to *reveal* it to us, very much *conduces* to a *hole Life*.

BUT that which more *nearly* concerns us, and hath a more *immediate* Influence on our Practice, is his *Government* of *Men*; the *Belief* of which is *indiſpenſably* neceſſary to render us *truly religious*. Now concerning this Government of God over Men, there are ſeven things neceſſary to be believed,

1. That the great *End* of Gods Government is the *Welfare* of *Mankind*.

2. That in order to this End, God hath given us *Laws* for the *Regulation* and *Government* of our *Actions*.

3. That

3. That to *ſecure* our Obedience to *theſe* Laws he hath *derived* his Authority upon all *lawful Sovereignties* to Govern us *according* to them.

4. That he is ready to *contribute* to us all *neceſſary Aſſiſtance*, to *enable* us to *obſerve* theſe Laws.

5. That the Aſſiſtance he contributes to us is ſuch as ſuppoſes us *free Agents*, and *concurs* with and *maintains* our *natural Freedom*.

6. That he takes particular Cogniſance of the *good* and *ill* Uſe which we make of our *natural Freedom*.

7. That he will certainly *reward* or *puniſh* us *accordingly*.

I. To oblige us to be truly religious it is neceſſary we ſhould believe that the great *End* of Gods Governing us is *our Welfare* and *Happineſs*. That being infinitely *raiſed* above all *Want* and *Indigence*, he doth not *aſſume* the Government of us to *advance* himſelf, or to *gratifie* any boundleſs *Ambition* of his own, which is a Vice that ſprings out of *Poverty* and *Indigence*, and therefore can have neither *Root* nor *Room* in a Nature ſo *infinitely* happy as *his*; but that all *his* Deſign in *reigning* over us is to do us *good* and to *conſummate* our Happineſs; to *reſtore* and *rectifie* our diſ-

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ordered Nature, and to *advance* and *raiſe* it to the utmoſt *Perfection*, and *Bliſs* and *Glory* it is capable of; to *protect* and *defend* us againſt *preſent* Evils, and *ſupport* us *under* them, and *convert* them into Inſtruments of *good*, and to *reſcue* us from that *worſt* of Evils, *Sin*, and from all thoſe *endleſs* Miſeries it is *pregnant* with. This we ought to believe is the *great* Scope of all *his* Acts of Government, and even of the *direſt Puniſhments* he inflicts; which are always *intended* either to *reclaim* the Offenders *themſelves*, or to *warn* others by the *ſad* Example of their *ſuffering* not to follow the *ill* Example of their *Sin*. And that this is the great End of his Government he himſelf hath expreſly declared. So *Pſal.*145.9. we are aſſured that *the Lord is good to all, and that his tender Mercies are over all his Works*; and Verſe 13.14. that in the Exerciſe of *his everlaſting Kingdom, he upholdeth all that fall, and raiſeth up all that are bowed down*; and tho in the *Adminiſtration* of his *Government*, he hath decreed to *cut off* all ſuch *obſtinate* Rebels as will not be *reduced* by the Methods of his *Love*, yet he hath declared that *he is not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance*, 2 *Pet.* 3.9. and that *he would have all men to*

be

be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth, 1 *Tim.* 2. 4. And unleſs we believe him to be a *benevolent* Governor, that aims at the *Good* of his Subjects, we ſhall look upon his Government as a *cruel Tyranny*, erected for no other End but to *ſqueeze* and *oppreſs* us, to *inthrall* our Liberty, and *rob* us of the Rights of our *Nature*, and to *chain* us down to an *endleſs* and *eaſieſs* Toil and Wretchedneſs; and whilſt we thus look upon it, it is impoſſible we ſhould ever *ſubmit* to it with that generous *Freedom* and *Chearfulneſs* that true Religion *requires*. But if we firmly believe that the *great* Deſign of it is to promote *our Welfare* both *here* and *hereafter*, we have all the reaſon in the World to *covet* to be *Governed* by *God*, and to receive *his Yoke* as a mighty *Grace* and *Favour*.

II. To oblige us to be truly religious it is alſo neceſſary we ſhould believe that God hath given us *Laws* for the *Regulation* and *Government* of our *Actions*. For without *Laws* to direct Men what to *do* and what to *avoid*, there can be no ſuch thing as *Government*, the proper buſineſs of which is to *regulate* Mens Actions, and without a *Rule* there can be no *Regulation*; ſo that divine *Rules* or *Laws* are neceſſarily included in the divine *Rule* or *Govern-*

ment; and as God cannot be ſuppoſed to give *Laws* without *Governing*, ſo neither can he be ſuppoſed to *Govern* without giving *Laws*; ſo that unleſs we believe that God governs us by *Laws*, we are utterly deſtitute both of all Reaſon *why* and of all Direction *wherein* to *obey* him, and have neither *Motive* to *inforce* nor *Meaſure* to *regulate* our Obedience. And as it is *neceſſary* we ſhould *believe* that he hath given us *Laws*, ſo it is alſo neceſſary we ſhould believe that *thoſe* Laws are for *our good*; that he neither *impoſed* them on us *pro imperio*, as arbitrary *Teſts* and *Trials* of our Obedience, nor *exacts* them of us to ſerve *himſelf* and advance his own *Intereſt* and *Greatneſs*, but that the great Deſign of them is to do *us* good, and to direct our Actions to our *own Intereſt*; to render our Lives *placid* and *eaſie*, and to *perfect* and *glorifie* our Natures. For while we look upon the *Matter* of Gods Law either as *indifferent* in *it ſelf*, and impoſed upon us by *him* for no other End but to ſhew his *abſolute Sovereinty* over us, or as *beneficial* only to *him* and impoſed upon us merely to promote *his* Intereſt, it is impoſſible we ſhould ever comply with it with a *free* and *chearful* Mind. We may haply obey him out of *Fear* and *Dread*, becauſe he

he is too *mighty* for us, and not to be *contended* with without infinite *Peril* and *Diſadvantage*; but 'tis impoſſible we ſhould obey thoſe Laws with a *reſigned* and *chearful* Will, from which we only fear *ill* but expect no *benefit*. Wherefore to oblige us to render a *free* and *unforced* Submiſſion to Gods Laws, it is *abſolutely* neceſſary we ſhould *believe* that the great Deſign of them is the good of *thoſe* they are *impoſed* on; and ſo the Pſalmiſt aſſures us that *the Statutes of the Lord are perfect, converting the Soul and making wiſe the ſimple; right, rejoycing the Heart; pure, enlightning the Eyes, true and righteous altogether, more to be deſired than Gold, yea than much fine Gold, ſweeter alſo than the Honey and the Honey-comb, and that in keeping them there is great Reward,* Pſalm 19. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. and that *the Law of Gods Mouth was better to him,* that is, for the *good* it did him *than thouſands of Gold and Silver,* Pſalm 119. 72.

And this if we *firmly* believe it will infinitely *encourage* our *Obedience*. For when I am ſure that God commands me *nothing* but what my own *Health* and *Eaſe* and *Happineſs* requires, and that every Law of his is both a *neceſſary* and a *Soverein* Preſcription againſt the *Diſeaſes* of my Nature, and that he could not have preſcribed me

leſs than he hath without being *defective* in his Care of my *Recovery* and *Happineſs*, with what *Prudence* or *Modeſty* can I *grudg* to *obey* him? How can I *think much* to ſerve *him*, when I ſerve *my ſelf* by it to the beſt Purpoſe in the World? Or why ſhould I ſo much as *wiſh* that he had not impoſed *this* or *that* Law on me, when I know he impoſed it to no *other* End but to *oblige* me to be *happy*, and that he cannot *Diſpenſe* with *any* Duty he *requires* of me without giving me *leave* to be *miſerable*. When therefore Gods *Authority* doth thus *ſtrike in* with *our Intereſt*, and walk *hand in hand* with it through every Duty it *impoſes*, by *refuſing* to *obey* him we *fight* againſt *our ſelves*, and renounce *his* Authority and *our own* Happineſs together.

III. To *oblige* us to be *truly religious* it is alſo neceſſary we ſhould believe that to *ſecure* our *Obedience* to theſe *Laws*, God hath *derived* his *own* Authority upon all lawful *ſoverein Powers*, to *govern* us according to *them*. That to promote *our* Happineſs which is the End of *his* Government, and to ſecure our *Obedience* to *his* Laws, which are the *Means* to that *End*, he hath eſtabliſhed a *viſible Authority* upon *Earth* to *repreſent* his own *inviſible Majeſty*, and in his Name to *exact* our *Obedience*

bedience to his Laws, ſo far as it is liable to *their* Cogniſance; and that the Perſons *veſted* with *this* Authority are *exalted* by it above all *Controll* or *Reſiſtance*, and in their ſeveral Dominions placed *next to* and immediately *under* God, by *whoſe* Commiſſion *alone* they *act*, and to *whoſe* Tribunal *alone* they are *accountable*; ſo that by reſiſting *them*, we do as much reſiſt *God*, whoſe *Deputy Governors* they *are*, as a *Neopolitan* doth the King of *Spain* by *levying Arms* againſt his *Vice-roy* of *Naples*; and by *refuſing* to obey their *juſt* and *lawful* Commands we *demur* to *Gods* Authority, who in every *juſt* thing they *impoſe* or *require*, *ſpeaks* to us by *their* Mouths, and *Commands* us by *their* Laws. For ſo the Scripture tells us not only that *they are ordained of God*, and that *to reſiſt them is to reſiſt the Ordinance of God*; not only that they are *the Miniſters of God*, and that therefore *for Conſcience ſake*, or in Reverence to Gods Authority which they bear, they are to be *obeyed*, *Rom.* 13. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. but *that they judge for God and not for Men*, 2 *Chron.* 19. 6. and that therefore *their Judgment is Gods*, Deut. 1. 17.

THE *Diſbelief* of which excludes *Gods Government* out of the World, and conſequently *diſſolves* all our *Obligations* of *Du-*

ty and *Allegiance* to him. For how can he be *ſupreme Governor* of the World, if all *other* Governments are not *immediately under* him? And how can *they* be immediately *under* him if they are not immediately *authorized by* him? And by what *other* Right can any Perſon or Perſons pretend to *govern* in Gods Kingdom *under* him, but by Commiſſion from him? For every *ſupreme Authority* is the *Head* and *Fountain* of *all other* Authorities, ſo far as it *extends*; and if it be *not* ſo, it cannot be *ſupreme*. And therefore unleſs *all Authority* be *derived* from *God*, he can have no ſuch thing as a *ſupreme Authority* in the World. And this I doubt not is very well underſtood by our *Atheiſtical Politicians*, who in *purſuance* of their *Denial* of *God*, derive *all Authority* from the *People*; being truly *aware* that if the *Authority* of the *Governors* can be derived from the *People*, it will neceſſarily follow that *both* muſt be *independent* upon *God*, and that to derive *Authority* to *govern* from any other *Head* but *God*, is to deny him to be the *ſupreme Governor* of the World, which is the thing they would be at. If it be ſaid, that *God* hath given *Authority* to the *People* to *authoriſe* their *Governors*, and ſo he is ſtill *Head* of *all* Authority tho it be *derived* from

from him *immediately* through the *People*; I anſwer, That *this* doth very little *mend* the matter. For if God hath given Authority to the People to authoriſe their Governors, he hath in Effect given the *Reins* out of his own *Hands*, and left the *People* to *govern* the *World*. For I would fain know, do *Governors* govern by *Gods* Authority or the *Peoples*? If by the *Peoples*, 'tis the *People* that govern by them and not *God*; if by *Gods*, 'tis *God* that governs by them and not the *People*. In ſhort, If they govern by the *Peoples* Authority, they are, *as Governors* at leaſt, *independent* from *God*, and *accountable* only to the *Tribunal* of the *People*; if by *Gods* Authority, they are *Independent* from the *People* and *accountable* only to the *Tribunal* of *God*. So that whether he *authoriſes* them *immediately* or by the *People* it is all one, the Queſtion being not ſo much *how* they are authoriſed, as by *what* Authority they *govern*; if it be by *Gods*, to God *alone* they are *accountable* if by the *People*, Gods Authority is quite *excluded* from having any hand in the *Government* of the *World*. In ſhort, If the *Choice* of the *People* makes their *Governor* without Gods *authoriſing* him, he is the *Peoples Vice-roy* and not *Gods*; but if it be *God* that *authoriſes* him, he is *Gods Vice-roy*

and not the *Peoples*. So that their *choice* even in *Elective* Governments can ſignifie no more than the bare *preſenting* of a Perſon to *God* to be *authoriſed* his *Vicegerent* by *him*: who, if their Choice be *juſt* and *lawful*, is ſuppoſed to *conſent* to and *approve* it, and *thereby* to authoriſe the *Perſon* ſo preſented. For *ſovereign Authority* in the *Abſtract* is *ordained* and *inſtituted* by God; but *abſtract Authority* cannot *govern* unleſs ſome *Perſon* be *veſted* with it; and to veſt him with it, *he* muſt not only be applied to the *Authority*, but the *Authority* muſt alſo be applied to *him*; but where the *People* have the *Right* of *Election*, *they* only apply the *Perſon* to the *Authority*, but 'tis Gods *Conſent* and *Approbation* that applies the *Authority* to the *Perſon*, who thereupon commences *Supreme* under God, and hath no *ſuperior Tribunal* but *Gods* to account to.

AND thus according to the Prophet *Daniel*, *the moſt High rules in the Kingdoms of Men*; Becauſe as *Lord* of all the *Lords*, and *King* of all the *Kings* of the *Earth*, *he* rules and governs by *their Miniſtry*, and *they* rule and govern by *his Authority*. So that to *ſecure* and *maintain* the *Obligations* which *Gods Government* of the World *devolves* upon us, it is *neceſſary* we ſhould *believe* that all *rightful Sovereigns* are *his* Vice-

Vicegerents, and do *rule* by *his* Commiſſion and Authority, and that the *Sword* which they bear is *Gods*, who hath delivered it into *their* Hands, to *protect* his faithful *Subjects*, and to *execute* his *Wrath*, and *avenge* his *Authority* upon Evil-doers. So that we cannot *rebel* againſt *them*, nor *wilfully* diſobey their *juſt* Commands, without giving a *Defiance* to *God himſelf*, and *rejecting* the *Yoke* of *his* Government. Whilſt therefore we behave our ſelves *Factiouſly* and *Seditiouſly* towards thoſe whom God hath ſet *over* us, we live as *Out-laws* in the *Kingdom* of *God*, without any *reſpect* to that *viſible Authority* by which he *governs* the *World*; and whilſt we *do* ſo, all our *Pretences* to *Religion* are *impudent* lies and Impoſtures.

IV. In order to our being *truly Religious* it is alſo *neceſſary* we ſhould *believe* that God is ready to *contribute* to us all that *Aſſiſtance* which is *neceſſary* to *enable* us to *obſerve* his Laws. That whereas in this *corrupt* State of our *Nature*, we are ſo *indiſpoſed* to all *good* by our *carnal* Affections and *vicious* Habits, as that without ſome *foreign Aid* it is *morally* certain we ſhall never be *reduced* to a through *Compliance* with our *Duty*, God is *always* ready not only to *ſecond* but to *prevent* our Endeavours

deavours, to *inſpire* good Thoughts into our *Minds*, and by them to *kindle* devout Affections in our *Wills*, and by them to *excite* us to a *conſtant* Courſe of *pious* and *virtuous* Endeavours; and that when he hath proceeded *thus far* with us, he doth not preſently *abandon* us to our ſelves, and leave us to *contend* and *ſtruggle* in vain with *inſuperable* Difficulties, but all along *co-operates* with us, *aids* and *aſſiſts* our Faculties, and with his *holy* Inſpirations *cheriſhes* our *languiſhing* Endeavours, till they have wrought their way through all the *Difficulties* of Religion into a *permanent* State of *Piety* and *Virtue*. So that unleſs we either turn a *deaf Ear* to thoſe *good* Thoughts he *ſuggeſts* to us, and refuſe to *liſten* to their *Perſwaſions*, or *quench* thoſe *holy* Affections which they *kindle* in us with *earthly* Cares and Pleaſures, or by *wilful* ſinning *harden* our Hearts againſt all the *Impreſſions* of his *Grace*, we ſhall not fail of being *frequently* and *powerfully* excited by him to *Piety* and *Virtue*; and when he thus *excites* us, if we do not wilfully *ſlacken* our Endeavours, and baſely ſurrender *back* our ſelves to our *Luſts*, in deſpight of all *our* Reſolutions and *his* Perſwaſions to the contrary, we ſhall be ſo *effectually* and *conſtantly* aſſiſted by him, as that it will

will be *impoſſible* for us to *fail* of *Succeſs*. For thus the Scripture aſſures us that *he gives Grace to the humble*, 1 *Pet.* 5.5. and thereby *works in them to will and to do*, *Phil.* 2.13. and that to this End *he gives his holy Spirit to every one that asks*, *Luke* 11. 13. The *Belief* of which is *abſolutely* neceſſary to *oblige* us to *ſubmit* to Religion. For tho we are *naturally* free to *Good* as well as *Evil*, yet through the *vicious* Habits we have generally contracted either through *youthful* Levity and Inconſideration, or *ill* Education and Example, our *Liberty* to *good* is ſo *ſtreightned* and *confined*, that whenever we *attempt* to *exerciſe* it, we find a *prevailing Byaſs* on our *Natures*, that carries us the *contrary* way, bearing *before* it all our *good* Reſolutions, and *tiring out* our *ſhort-breath'd* Endeavours, ſo that *the good we would, we do not, and the evil we would not, we do.* And therefore unleſs we can *depend* upon *God* for *Aſſiſtance* againſt the *Violence* and *Outrage* of our *bad* Inclinations, after we have once *ſtrugled* with them *in vain*, and thereby made a *woful* Experiment of our own *Impotence*, we ſhall out of mere *Deſpair* of *prevailing* againſt them, give over *attempting* it and utterly *abandon* our ſelves to their *Tyranny*.

But if we *firmly* believe that *God* who knows

knows *our* Weakneſs and our *Enemies* ſtrength, will in Proportion to *both* readily *aſſiſt* us, whenſoever we heartily *invoke* his Aid, and in *Concurrence* therewith *exert* our own *Endeavour*, we have all the *Encouragement* in the World to *undertake* our *Duty* maugre all the *Difficulties* that attend it. For being *aſſured* that God will *concur* with our *Endeavours*, we may *depend* upon it, that not only our *own Endeavours* are in *our* Power, but *Gods Aſſiſtance* too, and that the *Corruptions* of our *Nature* do not ſo much over-match *our* Endeavours as *Gods Aſſiſtance* over-matches *thoſe* Corruptions. So that if we heartily *exert* our *Endeavour*, we are ſure we cannot *fail* of *Succeſs*; becauſe we know that God will *aſſiſt* our Endeavour, and that *with* his Aſſiſtance we cannot but be *victorious*. Since therefore the *Grace of God* is as much under the Command of *our* Will as our own *Principles* of *Action*, it is as much in *our* Power to do that which we *cannot* do *without* Gods Grace, as to do that which we *can*. And therefore if *Gods Grace* be *ſufficient* to *ſupply* the *Defect* of our natural *Power*, and enable us to *conquer* the *Difficulties* of our Duty, we are ſure there is nothing in it can be *too hard* for us; becauſe *now* we can do not only

only all that we can do by *our ſelves*, but alſo all that we can do by the *Grace of God.*

V. To oblige us to be *truly Religious* it is alſo *neceſſary* we ſhould *believe* that the *Aſſiſtance* which God affords us, is ſuch as ſuppoſes us *free Agents*, and *concurs* with and *maintains* our *natural Freedom.* That it doth not neceſſarily *determine* us to *good*, but leaves it to our own *free Choice* to *determine* our ſelves which way we pleaſe; that as he acts upon *neceſſary* Agents by a *neceſſary* Influx and Cauſality which they cannot *reſiſt*, and *determines* thoſe things to act by *his* Will, which have no Will of *their own* to *determine* them, ſo he acts upon *free* Agents by a *free* and *unconſtraining* Influence, *i. e.* by *ſuggeſting* Arguments to their *Minds*, to *incline* and *perſwade* them, but leaves it to their own *Liberty* to *conſider* thoſe Arguments or *not*, and to *comply* with thoſe *Perſwaſions* or *reject* them; and that tho as he hath ſometimes *ſuſpended* the Powers of *neceſſary* Agents and *interrupted* the *natural* Courſe of their *Motion*, as when he forbad the *Sun* to *move*, and the *Fire* to *burn*, ſo he hath at other times *reſtrained* the *natural* Liberty of *free Agents*, and *determined* them by an *over-ruling* Neceſſity, yet both the *one* and the *other* are

extraordinary

extraordinary and *miraculous*: but that in the *ordinary* Courſe of his Government, he doth as well leave *free Agents* to that natural *Freedom* with which he firſt *created* them, as *neceſſary* ones to thoſe *Neceſſities* which he firſt *impreſſed* upon their Natures. For his *Providence* is *ſuccedaneous* to his *Creation*, and did at firſt *begin* where that *ended*, and doth ſtill *proceed* as it *began*, *ordering* and *governing* all things according to the ſeveral *Frames* and *Models* in which he firſt *caſt* and *created* them. Nor can he order and govern them *otherwiſe* without *unraveling* his own Creation, and making things to be otherwiſe than he *firſt* made them. For how can he ordinarily *neceſſitate* thoſe Agents whom he firſt made *free* without *changing* their *Natures* from *free* to *neceſſary*, and *making* them a *different* kind of Being than he *made* them? So that tho in the Courſe of his Government God doth powerfully *importune* and *perſwade* us, yet he lays no *Neceſſity* on our *Wills*, but leaves us free to *chooſe* or *refuſe*; and as the *Temptations* of *Sin* incline us *one* way, ſo the *Grace of God* inclines us *another*, but *both* leave us to our own *Liberty* to go which way we *pleaſe*. And this the Scripture plainly aſſerts, where it makes mention of Mens *reſiſting the Holy Ghoſt*,

Ghoſt, *Acts* 7. 51. and *grieving and quenching the Spirit of God*, Eph. 4. 30. 1 Theſ. 5. 19. and *refuſing to hear when God calls, and to regard when he ſtretches forth his Hand*, and of their *ſetting his Counſel at naught and rejecting his Reproofs*, *Prov.* 1. 24, 25. and in a word, where it makes mention of ſome Mens *baffling* and *defeating* that very Grace which would have *conquered* and *perſwaded* others, *Mat.* 11. 21. Which plainly imply that all that *Aſſiſtance* to do our *Duty*, that God ordinarily *vouchſafes* us in the Courſe of his Government, is ſuch as no way *determins* or *neceſſitates* us.

THE Belief of which is highly *neceſſary* to *engage* us in the *Service* of Religion. For while Men imagine that their Duty is *ſuch* as they cannot heartily *comply* with, without being *compelled* to it by an *irreſiſtible Grace*, and that *no* Aſſiſtance of God can be *ſufficient* to *this* End, but that which *ſuſpends* their *Liberty* to *Evil*, and fatally *determins* them to *Good*, what ſhould move them to *exert* their own *Endeavour*? Why ſhould they *watch* and *pray* and *ſtrive*, and *contend* againſt a *corrupt* Nature? For if *God* will make them good *irreſiſtibly*, their *Endeavour* is *needleſs*; but if he will *not*, it is *Labour in vain*. To what

what End ſhould they *ply* the *Oar* to *ſtem* the *Tide* of a *degenerate* Nature, ſince *without* an *irreſiſtible Gale* from Heaven they ſhall never *ſucceed*, and *with* it they ſhall whether they *ply* or *no*? So that while Men live in Expectance of an *irreſiſtible Grace* to make them *good*, they *quit* themſelves of all their *Obligations* to a *pious* and *virtuous Endeavour*; but ſo long as they believe that *Gods Grace* is *ſuch* as *ſuppoſes* and *leaves* them *free*, *ſuch* as they may *defeat* or *proſper* by the *good* or *ill* uſe of their *Liberty*, they cannot but diſcern themſelves infinitely *obliged* to *co-operate* with it, to *liſten* and *conſent* to its bleſſed *Motions* and *Perſwaſions*, and *conſtantly* to *endeavour* to *comply* with them in their *Actions*, or at leaſt not to *reſiſt* them, and *harden* and *fortifie* themſelves againſt them, by acting counter *to* and flying in the face *of* their own *Convictions*. For ſince the *Grace of God* doth not *determin* us to *good*, but leaves us to our own *Freedom*, we can never *expect* to be determined to good without our *free Concurrence*; which if we *refuſe* we ſhall certainly *periſh* in our *Sin*, and have not only the *Blood* of our own *Souls* to *anſwer* for, but all that *Grace* too which we have *baffled* and *defeated*.

VI. To oblige us to be *truly Religious* it is *neceſſary* that we ſhould *believe* that God

God takes *particular* Cogniſance of the *good* and *ill* Uſe we make of our *natural Freedom*; that he doth not merely *gaze* upon our Actions as an *indifferent* and *unconcerned* Spectator, but beholds them with the higheſt *Concern* and *Regard*, with infinite *Complacency* or *Deteſtation*, and treaſures them up in his *all-comprehending* Mind, to be produced *for* or *againſt* us in the day of fearful *Reckonings* and *Accounts*; that he doth not *inſpect* our Actions with a *paſſant* and *curſory* View, as things of *little* or *no* Moment, but lays them up in *everlaſting* Remembrance, ſo that every *good* or *ill* thing we do ſtands upon *Record* in the *Mind* of God in order to our final *Acquittal* or *Condemnation*. For ſo the Scripture tells us, not only that *Gods Eyes are upon the Ways of Man, and that he ſeeth all his goings*, *Job* 34. 21. and that *his Eyes run to and fro throughout the Earth, and are in every Place beholding the good and Evil*, 2 *Chron.* 16. 9. and *Prov.* 15. 3. but that he *ſees* good Actions tho *done in ſecret, and will reward them openly*, *Matth.* 6. 6. and that *he will bring every work into Judgment with every ſecret thing whether it be good or evil*, *Eccleſ.* 12. 14.

THE Belief of which is *abſolutely* neceſſary to *found* the *Obligations* of Religion.

For if we ſuppoſe either that God *ſees* not our Actions, or looks upon them with an *indifferent* Eye, without taking any *Notice* or *Cogniſance* of them, there is no *religious Conſideration* can *oblige* us. For upon *this* Suppoſal, our *Actions* muſt all be *indifferent* to *him*; and if they are *indifferent* to *him*, what reaſon have *we* to make any *difference* between them? 'Tis true, *good* Actions are in themſelves *beneficial* and *evil* ones *prejudicial* to us, and therefore for our own *Intereſt*-ſake we ought to *chooſe* the *one* and *refuſe* the *other*; but this *abſtracted* from all Reſpects to *God*, is only a *Prudential* and not a *religious Obligation*; but why ſhould we *do* any *good* or *avoid* any *evil* upon *Gods* account, if *Good* and *Evil* are *alike* to him? But if we *firmly* believe that God not only *ſees* whatſoever we *do*, but takes *particular* Notice of all our *good* and *evil* Actions, and out of an *high* Complacency in the *one* and Abhorrence of the *other* treaſures up *both* in *everlaſting* Remembrance, we cannot but diſcern our ſelves *obliged* by all the *Reaſon* in the *World* to *chooſe* what is *good*, and *eſchew* what is *evil*. For what an infinite *Encouragement* is it to do *good*, to conſider that while we are *doing* it Gods *Eye* is upon us, *regarding* us with high

Applauſe

Applauſe and *Approbation*, and *entering* it with all its *acceptable* Circumſtances into the eternal *Record* of his own *Mind*, from whence it ſhall be *produced* in the *laſt Day*, and *proclaimed* before *Men* and *Angels* to our everlaſting *Honour* and *Glory*? So that when our *Memory* is *loſt* upon Earth, and all that we *did* is *ſwallowed up* in the deep *Abyſs* of *Oblivion*, all our *Pieties* and *Virtues* ſhall be *famed* in the *Records* of *Heaven*, and have *everlaſting Memorials* in the *Mind* of God. As on the contrary, what an infinite *Diſcouragement* is it from *ſinning*, to conſider that the *Eye* of *that* God to whom *Vengeance belongs*, is *intent* upon us, *following* us through all our *Retreats* and *Concealments*, and *Recording* every *ill* Deed with all its *foul* Aggravations in the eternal *Volumes* of his own *Remembrance*, which he will *one Day* moſt certainly *open* and *read* out before all the World to our everlaſting *Shame* and *Confuſion*? So that when the *pleaſure* of our Sin is *gone*, and all that rendred it *tempting* or *deſirable* for ever *vaniſht* and *forgotten*, the *Shame* and *Infamy* of it ſhall ſtand upon *Record*, and be *tranſmitted* down to *eternal* Ages.

VII. and Laſtly, To oblige us to be *truly religious* it is alſo *neceſſary* we ſhould

believe that God will *reward* and *punish* us according to our *doings*; that he is neither an *idle* nor an *impotent* Spectator of our Actions, that merely *pleases* and *vexes* himself with the Contemplation of them; but that all the Notice he takes of them is in order to his *rewarding* and *punishing* them, which he will one day most certainly do to our everlasting *Joy* or *Confusion*. But because this Argument will be the Subject of the ensuing Chapter, I shall insist no farther on it here.

SECT. II.

Of the Proofs *and* Evidences *which there are to create in us a* Belief *of the* divine Providence.

HAVING in the foregoing Section given an account of those *Parts* or *Branches* of the *Divine Providence*, which are *necessary* to be *believed* in order to the *founding* the *Obligations* of *Religion*; I shall proceed in the next place, to shew what *Evidences* there are to create this *Belief* in us; and because this is the great *Fundamental* of *all* Religion, upon the *Belief* of which it all *immediately* depends, I shall endeavour to *demonstrate* the *Truth* of it,

1. *A*

1. *A priori,* by Arguments drawn from *God himſelf.*

2. *A poſteriori,* by Arguments drawn from *ſenſible Effects* of God in the World.

I. I ſhall endeavour to aſſert the *Truth* of a *divine Providence* by Arguments drawn from *God himſelf.* For ſuppoſing that there is a *God,* that is to ſay, an infinitely *wiſe,* and *good* and *powerful* Cauſe of all things, (which I doubt not to make appear when I come to diſcourſe of the *ſenſible Effects* of God in the World) it will from thence neceſſarily follow that he *upholds, diſpoſes* and *governs* all things by an over-ruling *Providence*; For

1. If there be ſuch a *God,* he muſt neceſſarily *be* and *exiſt* of *himſelf,* without any *dependence* upon any *ſuperiour Cauſe.*

2. He muſt neceſſarily be the *Cauſe* of all *other* things that *are* and do *exiſt.*

3. He muſt neceſſarily be *preſent with* all things.

4. Where ever he is, ſo *active* are his *Perfections* that he cannot but *operate* whereſoever he finds *Objects* to work *upon.* From all which I ſhall make appear it will neceſſarily follow, that he continually *exerciſes* an over-ruling *Providence* over the World.

I. If there be a God he muſt neceſſa-

lily *exiſt* or *be* of *himſelf* without *Dependence* on any *ſuperiour Cauſe*. For when we ſpeak of *God*, we mean by him a Being that is as *perfect* as it is *poſſible*, that hath nothing *before* him, nothing *ſuperior* to him, nothing *greater* than himſelf; which cannot be meant of any *derived* Being; becauſe all Effects are *after* their Cauſes, and in ſome reſpect *inferiour* to them, as *deriving* their Beings, and all their Excellencies and Perfections *from* them. But to ſay of God that he is *after* or any way *inferiour* to any Cauſe, is a palpable *Contradiction* to the very *Notion* of him; 'tis to ſay that there is ſomething *before* the *eternal* Something, *ſuperior* to the *Supreme* Something, more *perfect* than *infinite* Perfection. So that either there *can* be *no* ſuch Being as a *God* in the World, or he muſt be *of himſelf* or *from* his *own* Eſſence, in which there muſt be ſuch an infinite *Fulneſs* of *Being*, as that from all Eternity *paſt* to all Eternity *to come* it is *infinitely* removed from *not Being*, and ſo by a Neceſſity of Nature muſt *from* ever *have* been and *for* ever *be*. And *ſuch* a Being we muſt admit of whether we will admit of a *God* or *no*; for either we muſt allow that *this World*, or at leaſt the *Matter* of it exiſts of *it ſelf* by its own *never-failing*

failing Fulneſs of Being, without ever needing any *Cauſe* to *produce* it, (which as I ſhall ſhew you by and by is *impoſſible*) or that all things in it *derive* their Being from ſome *firſt Cauſe* who having *no* Cauſe in being *before* him muſt neceſſarily be *uncauſed* and *unproduced*; and if God exiſts *of himſelf*, as he *muſt* do ſuppoſing he *is*, he muſt be *ſuperiour* to all things; for that which is of *it ſelf* cannot but *be*, and that which cannot but be can have no Power above it, becauſe if it *hath*, that Power might have either *hindered* or *extinguiſhed* its Being, and ſo it might *not* have been.

So that Gods *Self-exiſtence* neceſſarily ſuppoſes him exalted *above* all Power and Superiority, and conſequently to be the *ſupreme* and *ſovereign* Power *over* all things; but to ſuppoſe him to be *ſupreme* and *Sovereign* without exerciſing *Rule* and *Dominion*, is *ridiculous*; for without the Exerciſe of Dominion ſupreme Power is but a *uſeleſs* and *inſignificant* Cypher-flouriſh with a glorious Name, *Rule* and *Dominion* being the only proper Sphere for *ſupreme Power*, as ſuch, to *move* and *act* in. So that unleſs God *rules* and *governs*, he is ſupreme to *no Purpoſe*, and his ſovereign Power is *uſeleſs* and *in vain*; for if he exert his ſovereign Power *at all*, it muſt be in *Rule*

and *Dominion*, which is its only natural *Province*; but if he doth *not*, his Sovereignty is only a *Majeſtick Sloth* that ſits *ſleeping* in an *awful* Throne with its *Hands* in its *Boſom*, without ever doing any thing that is *Sovereign*; and of what Uſe is that *ſovereign Power* that never exerciſes any *act* of *Sovereignty*? Since therefore Gods *Self-Exiſtence* neceſſarily *ſuppoſes* his *ſovereign Power* over all things, we muſt either grant that he continually *exerciſes* this Power in *ruling* and *governing* the World, or aſſert that it is utterly *uſeleſs* and *in vain*, which as I ſhall ſhew by and by is as *abſurd* as it is *blaſphemous*.

II. If there be a God he muſt neceſſarily be the *Cauſe* of all *other* things that *are* and do *exiſt*. For whatſoever might *not* have been, or may *not* be, muſt be derived from ſomething which cannot *but be*. If it might *not* have been how came it to *be*? Not from *it ſelf* to be ſure, for then it muſt *always* have neceſſarily *been*; and therefore it muſt finally be reſolved into ſome *other* Cauſe which is of *it ſelf*, and ſo cannot but always *have been* and always *be*. Now that this World is not of *it ſelf*, but from ſome *other* Cauſe that is of *it ſelf* is evident; becauſe whatſoever is of *it ſelf*, muſt neceſſarily have all the *Being*, and all the

the *Perfection* of Being that is *poſſible*. For that which is of *it ſelf* is *neceſſarily* of it ſelf, and it is not only true *that it cannot but be*, but alſo *that it cannot but be of it ſelf*; for if it might not have been of *it ſelf*, it might not have been *at all*, becauſe *it ſelf* or its *own Eſſence* is the only *Ground* or *Reaſon* of its Being; and therefore if that *Reaſon* might have *failed* it might *never* have been *at all*. Now that which *neceſſarily* is of *it ſelf*, hath neither *actual* nor *poſſible* Cauſe of Being; for if it hath an *actual* Cauſe, it is not of *it ſelf*; if any *poſſible* one, it is not *neceſſarily* of it ſelf; and if it hath no *poſſible* Cauſe of Being, it is *all* that its *poſſible* to *be*, that is, it is ſo *compleat* and *perfect*, that no poſſible *Being* or *Perfection* of Being can be *added* to it.

BESIDES, that which is of *it ſelf* includes *Neceſſity* of Being in its *Eſſence*, and that which includes Neceſſity of Being, muſt always *actually* be what it *is*, and have nothing *potential* in its Nature; and that which hath nothing potential muſt have all *poſſible* Being and Perfection. For if there be any *poſſible* Perfection of Being which it *hath* not, it muſt be in *poſſibility* of being what it *is* not; and if ſo, it is not *neceſſarily* what it *is*. So that if the World be of *it ſelf*, it muſt include in the Nature of

of it a *Neceſſity* of Being; and if ſo, it muſt always *actually* be, that is, be always out of all *Poſſibility* either of *not being* or of being *what* it *is not*; and if it be out of all Poſſibility of not Being, it muſt have all Poſſible *Being*; if out of all Poſſibility of being what it is not, it muſt have all poſſible *Perfection of Being*, that is, all poſſible *Power* and *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, which do all as neceſſarily reſult from *Self-Being* as any *eſſential Property* from any *Eſſence*. Since therefore this material World hath none of theſe *poſſible Perfections* of Being in it, it is impoſſible it ſhould be of *it ſelf*, and if it be not of it ſelf, it muſt have a *Cauſe* of Being that is diſtinct *from* and *before* it ſelf; and what can this Cauſe be but *God*; ſince that which *cauſed* the World muſt be *before* all Cauſes, and that which is before all Cauſes muſt be *uncauſed* and of *it ſelf*, and that which is of it ſelf muſt have *all poſſible Perfection*, and conſequently be *God*.

SINCE therefore the World was *made* by God, it will from hence neceſſarily follow that it is *ruled* and *governed* by him. For if he made the World, to be ſure he made it for *ſome End*, it being unconceivable that infinite *Wiſdom* ſhould frame a World that is capable of the moſt *noble* and *excellent* Ends, without *deſigning* it to any

any End at all; and if he deſigned it for any End, to be ſure he is *concerned* that *that* End whatever it be ſhould be *accompliſhed*; and if he be, his own Concernment will lead him to the *Exerciſe* of a *Providence*, which is nothing elſe but a *conſtant* and *ſteady* Guidance of thoſe Beings which he hath made, to thoſe *common* and *particular* Ends for which he made them. For if he made them for *any* End, to be ſure *whatever* it was, he did not let it *drop* out of his *Mind* and *Thoughts* as ſoon as he had made them, but ſtill carries it along in his *Eye* and *Intention*; and if he ſtill *intends* that End, there is no doubt but he ſtill *proſecutes* it, which he cannot do without a *Providence*; for how can he *drive* things *on* to the *Ends* for whice he *made* them, if he be *withdrawn* from the *World*, and hath wholly *ſequeſtred* himſelf from all the *Affairs* of it?

III. If there be a *God*, he muſt neceſſarily be *preſent with* all things; becauſe being *of himſelf* without any Cauſe, he muſt be without any *Bounds* or *Limits* of Being. For it is altogether unconceivable how any thing that is of it ſelf ſhould be *reſtrained* or *limited by* it ſelf. For tho we muſt allow ſomething to be of *it ſelf* whether we will admit of a *God* or *no*, yet we cannot ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe that which is of *it ſelf* to be the *Cauſe* of it ſelf, without a *Contradiction*; becauſe every *Cauſe* muſt be *before* its *Effect*; and therefore to ſuppoſe that which is of it ſelf, to be the *Cauſe* of it ſelf, is to ſuppoſe it to be *before* it ſelf, that is, to *be* when it is *not*, or to *be* and *not* be together, which is *impoſſible*. When therefore we ſay that *ſomething* is *of it ſelf*, our meaning can be no other that *this*, that it hath ſuch an *immenſe Plenitude* of Being in it ſelf, as that it neither *needed* nor *required* any *Cauſe* to produce it; and how can that which is of it ſelf without being the Cauſe of it ſelf, be any way *reſtrained* or *limited* by it ſelf? For that which *limits* Beings, is only the *Will* or *Power* of their *Cauſes*, which either *would* not or *could* not beſtow any further *Being* or *Perfection* upon them; and therefore only ſuch things as are *cauſed* are *limited*, becauſe they being produced out of *nothing*, are only *ſo far* and no *farther* brought into Being, as their Cauſe was *willing* or *able* to bring them. That therefore which exiſts of *it ſelf* without any *Cauſe* of *Being*, muſt exiſt of it ſelf without any *Limits* of *Being*; becauſe it was neither limited by *it ſelf* nor by any *other* Cauſe; and that which hath *nothing* to

limit

limit it, muſt neceſſarily be *immenſe* and *boundleſs*. God therefore being this *Self-exiſting Being*, muſt neceſſarily be of an *unlimited Eſſence*; an Eſſence which no *poſſible Space* can either *circumſcribe* or *define*, but muſt neceſſarily be *diffuſed* all *through*, *circumfuſed* all *about*, and *preſent with* all things.

AND if he be *preſent with* all things, how is it imaginable he ſhould *ſit ſtill* among them, and exerciſe no *Providence* over them? For ſince he is a *living Being*, he muſt be *vitally* preſent whereſoever he *is*, and that he ſhould be *vitally* and yet *unactively* preſent among a *World of Beings*, that he ſhould live in this wide *Univerſity* of things, and in every *Part* of it, and yet take no more *Notice of*, have no more *Influence upon* it than if he were a *dead* and *ſenſleſs* Idol, is altogether *inconceivable*; and we may as well imagine a *Sun* in the Univerſe without *Heat* or *Light*, as a *living* God *ſurrounding* and *penetrating* all things, without ever *exerting* his *active Powers*, or *ſhedding forth* his *vital Influence* upon them. For where ever *life is* it will *operate*; and therefore ſince God who is all *Life* and *Activity is* every where, he muſt *operate* every where, and if he *operate* every where, that *Operation* is an *Univerſal Providence*.

IV. and

IV. and Laſtly. IF there be a God, he muſt be endowed with all thoſe *active* Perfections of *Power* and *Wiſdom*, *Juſtice* and *Goodneſs*; all which muſt be *preſent* whereſoever *he* is. For as for *Power*, it is nothing elſe but the *Spring* or *Fountain* of *Cauſality*; and therefore ſince God is the *firſt* Cauſe, he muſt neceſſarily be the *Spring* of the *Power* of all *Cauſes*; and that from which all *Power* is *derived* muſt it ſelf be *all-powerful*; otherwiſe it would *derive* more Power than it *hath*, and be the *Cauſe* of *that* whereof it hath no *Cauſality*, which is a *Contradiction*. And then as for *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, they are inſeparable to perfect *Power*; which how *forcible* ſoever it be, cannot be *perfect* except it be *conducted* by *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*; for without *theſe*, Power is only an *irreſiſtible Whirlwind* that *ſweeps* and *hurries* all things before it without any *End*, or *Method*, or *Order*. And what a *lame*, *blind* and *defective* Power muſt that be that can neither *deſign* nor *contrive*, neither *propoſe* to it ſelf *beneficial* Ends, nor yet *chooſe* ſuitable *Means* to effect them? and in a word, that can neither intend *well* nor proſecute *wiſely*? If therefore the Power of God be *perfect*, as it cannot *but* be, being the Original of *all* Power, it muſt neceſſarily be

conjoyn'd

conjoyn'd with perfect *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*; with perfect Goodneſs to *level* its Intentions at *good* and *beneficial* Ends; with perfect Wiſdom to *order* and *direct* its Proſecutions.

SINCE therefore perfect *Power*, and *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* are eſſential to God, they muſt be *coextended* with his *Eſſence*, which as I ſhewed before is *extended* to *all* things. And how can we conceive ſuch *active* Perfections as theſe to be *preſent with* all things without ever *acting upon* them? For the very *End* and *Perfection* of all theſe Attributes conſiſts in their *Exerciſe*; for ſo the End of *Power* is *Action*, the End of *Wiſdom* is *ordering* and *contriving*, and the End of *Goodneſs* is *doing good*. How then can we ſuppoſe that an infinite *Power* whoſe End is *Action*, ſhould be *preſent* where a World of things are to be *done*, and *do nothing*? that infinite *Wiſdom* whoſe End is *ordering* and *contriving*, ſhould be *preſent* where a World of things are to be *ordered*, and *order nothing*? or that infinite *Goodneſs* whoſe End is *doing good*, ſhould be *preſent* where a World of *good* is to be *done*, and *do* none *at all*? What is this but to *transform* the divine *Perfections* into ſenſleſs *Idols*, that have *Eyes*, but *ſee not*, *hands*, but *act not*; that have *boundleſs*,

boundleſs,

boundleſs, but *uſeleſs* and *unactive* Powers; that have *glorious Names*, but in reality ſtand but for ſo many *Cyphers* in the World? And thus I have endeavoured to *demonſtrate* a *Providence* by Arguments drawn from *God* himſelf; but becauſe there may be ſomething in them too *ſubtile* and *Metaphyſical* for common Apprehenſions to reach, I have but *briefly* inſiſted on them. I proceed therefore in the ſecond place to another ſort of Arguments, which are more *eaſie* and *obvious*, *viz.* ſuch as are drawn from *ſenſible Effects*, of which I ſhall give theſe ſix Inſtances.

1. The conſtant *Direction* of things to the ſame *good Ends*, which have no *Deſign* in themſelves.

2. The *watchful Providence* of things which have no *Fore-ſight* in themſelves.

3. The mutual *Agreement* and *Correſpondency* of things which have no *Underſtanding* of themſelves or of one another.

4. The *Continuation* of things in the ſame *comely Order*, which have no *Government* of themſelves.

5. *Miraculous* Events.

6. *Predictions* of *future* and *remote* Contingencies.

I. ONE *ſenſible* Inſtance of a *divine Providence* is the conſtant *Direction* of things

things to the ſame *good Ends* which have no *Deſign* in themſelves. When we ſee things *void* of all *Senſe* and *Reaſon* as conſtantly *directed* to *good* Ends, as they could be if they *had* Senſe and Reaſon, we may be ſure that there is a Reaſon *without* them that *framed* them for thoſe Ends, and *directs* them to them; it being unconceivable how *Chance* or blind *Neceſſity* that have no *Deſign*, or *Art*, or *Contrivance* in them, ſhould *conſtantly* operate as *regularly* as *Reaſon* it ſelf. Now if we ſurvey this vaſt Univerſality of things, we may eaſily obſerve, *at leaſt* of the *generality* of them, that they are framed *for* and directed *to* ſome *Wiſe* and *excellent* End; and though through our own *ſhort-ſightedneſs* or *want* of *Enquiry* we do not ſee the *Uſe* and *Tendency* of them *all*, yet this is no Argument at all that they are *vain* and *ſuperfluous*. For as we *now* ſee the Uſe of a world of things which *paſt* Generations underſtood not, ſo there is no doubt but *future* Generations will underſtand the Uſe of a World more than *we*; and therefore ſince the *Uſefulneſs* of the Generality of things is now ſo *apparent* and *viſible*, we ought in all Reaſon to conclude, that *our* not diſcerning the *Uſefulneſs* of them *all*, proceeds not from *their* Defect but from *our own* Ignorance.

LET us therefore briefly ſurvey this *beautiful* Scene of things that is *before* us. The *Sun* and *Earth*, for Inſtance, are things that are utterly *void* of *Underſtanding*, and therefore can have no *Deſign* or *Contrivance* in them; how then came they to *place* and *continue* themſelves at ſuch a *commodious* Diſtance from one another? Whereas in ſuch a *vaſt* and *immenſe* Space they might have found ten thouſand Millions of *other* Places and Diſtances to *fix* in? The *Earth* might have found *room* enough to place it ſelf either much *nearer* to or much *remoter* from the *Sun* than it *is*; but if it had done *ſo*, it muſt have either been everlaſtingly *parched* or everlaſtingly *frozen* and *benighted*, and either way converted into an *uſeleſs*, *barren* and *inhabitable* Deſert; whereas where it *now* is, it ſtands at the moſt *convenient* Diſtance from the Sun, to be *warmed* and *cheriſhed* by his *enlivening* Fires, and neither to be *roaſted* by being too *near* them, nor *frozen* by being too *far* from them; but to receive from them ſuch a *temperate* heat, as is ſufficient to *excite* its *ſeminal* Virtues, and to *draw up* its *Juices* into them, and thereby to *ripen* its natural *Fruits*, and in a word, to *comfort* and *refreſh* its Inhabitants, and to render it to them

them a *pleaſant*, a *healthful*, and a *fruitful* Paradiſe. Since therefore of ten thouſand Millions of Places wherein it *might* have fixed in that *Immenſity* of *Space* that ſurrounds it, it hath *fixed upon* and doth ſtill *continue in* the *beſt* without any *Deſign* or *Wiſdom* of its own, it is plain that there *is* an over-ruling Wiſdom *without* it that *choſe* its place and *fixes* and *determins* it thereunto. Again, How came the *Sun* (for whether it be the *Earth* that moves about the *Sun*, or the Sun *about* the Earth is all one to our Enquiry) how came this Sun, I ſay, which hath no *Reaſon* to govern it ſelf by, to be *determined* to ſuch a *uſeful* Courſe of Motion? what makes this *vaſt* and *mighty* Body *move round* the Earth in twenty four hours, in finiſhing which *ſpacious* Circle of Motion it muſt fly far *ſwifter* than a Bullet from a Canons Mouth; and yet through ſo many Ages each twenty four hours it hath *conſtantly* performed it, without being ſo much as one Minute *faſter* or *ſlower*; whereby it makes thoſe *juſt* and *regular* Returns of *Day* and *Night* to both the *Hemiſpheres*, ſo that neither the *one* nor the *other* is either too much *heated* by his Preſence, or too long *benighted* by his Abſence, becauſe as ſoon as the *one* hath been ſufficiently *warmed* and *che-*

riſhed with his Rays, he immediately *retires* from it into the *other*, and by ſo doing he gives the *active* Animals leave to *reſt*, the *over-heated* Air to *cool*, and the *Gaſping* Earth to repair its *fainting* Vertues, which a *continued* Heat would ſoon *exhauſt* and *extinguiſh*. Thus by returning *Day* and *Night* to both Parts of the Earth once in twenty four Hours, he preſerves both their *Heat* and *Moiſture* upon which all *Generation* depends, in a *due* and *regular* Temper, ſo that neither their radical *Moiſture* is *conſumed* by the *parching* Droughts of the *Day*, nor their vital *Heat extinguiſhed* by the *cool* Moiſtures of the *Night*, but the one ſtill *allays* and *tempers* the other by their *quick* and *alternate* Revolutions. How then came the Sun that *underſtands* no utility and *deſigns* no End, to be *determined* to this Courſe of Motion, which above all others is ſo admirably *uſeful* and *advantageous* to this World we live in? Again, What is the Reaſon that ſince he thus *equally* moves round the Earth, he doth not *always* move in the *ſame* Circle, but runs out every Day into a different Circle almoſt a whole Degree farther *northward* or *ſouthward*, and this ſo *conſtantly* and ſo *preciſely* that in ſix thouſand ſucceeding Revolutions, he hath never varied ſo much as

one

one Minute from his Courſe either *one* way or the *other*, and by theſe his *ſtated Excurrencies* towards the *North* and *South* he makes the *Seaſons* of the *Year*, gives a *Summer* and a *Winter*, a *Spring* and a *Fall* to all Parts of the Earth, without which the Earth would long ere this have been utterly *uſeleſs*, and all its *Fruits* and for want of them its *Animals* too would have for ever *periſhed*? For ſome Parts of it would have been *ſcorched* with everlaſting *Heat*, other *bound up* with everlaſting *Froſt*; here it would have been all a *Sandy*, there all an *Icy* Deſert, and ſo both *Vegetation* and *Generation* would every where have utterly *ceaſt* either for want of *Moiſture* or for want of *Heat*. How came the Sun then which hath neithr *Senſe* nor *Reaſon* of his own to *guide* him, to be *directed* into ſuch a *commodious* Courſe of annual Motion, whenas in that vaſt Space he moves in, he might as well have run ten thouſand *other* Courſes of Motion? He might have moved all the Year round the Earths *Equator*; but if he had done ſo, all the *middle* Tracts of Earth both *Northward* and *Southward* would ſoon have been *ſcorched* up with his continual *Preſence*, and all the *remoter* Parts both ways would quickly have *died*

with *Cold* through his perpetual *Abſence*: or he might have run his annual Courſe on *one* ſide only of the Earths *Equator*, and made his circular Excurſions *to* or *beyond* the *Pole*; but if he had done ſo, he muſt have left a great Part of the oppoſite Hemiſphere expoſed to everlaſting *Night* and *Cold*, whereas in the annual Courſe of Motion he *now* performs, he ſheds forth his *Light*, and *Heat*, and *Influence* over all the World, and by turns gives every Part its *yearly* Seaſons; which is a plain Evidence that all his Motions are *conducted* by a *wiſe* and *over-ruling* Mind, which among ſo *many* Courſes of Motion that lie before him in the *boundleſs* Space he moves in, hath *determined* him to *that* which for Perpetuity is much the *beſt* and moſt *commodious*.

AND the ſame is to be ſaid of the Motions of the *Moon*, which Nature hath deſigned for a *vicarious* Light to the Sun, to *ſupply* his Abſence and *perform* his Office in this lower World. For what makes this *ſenſeleſs* and *irrational* Planet, that moves without any *Intention* of its own, wander by turns *Northward* and *Southward* ſome Degrees beyond the Sun? And what makes it move *Northward* when the Sun is *Southward*, and again *South-ward* when the Sun is *North-ward*, whereas in that *im-*

menſe

menſe Space wherein it ſwims, it hath room enough to run a thouſand *other* Courſes of Motion, none of which could have been ſo *advantageous* to us as *this*? For by moving *North-ward* when the Sun is *South-ward* and ſo *è contra*, it *moderates* the Cold and Darkneſs of the winter Nights, and by paſſing beyond the *Tropicks* which are the Bounds of the Sun, it in ſome meaſure ſupplies his *Abſence*, by enlightning thoſe *long* and *tedious* Nights in which the Regions towards the *Poles* are buried; which is a plain Inſtance of the ſingular *Care* of *Providence*, that no Parts of the Earth ſhould be left altogether *deſtitute* of the *neceſſary* Comforts of the heavenly *Light* and *Warmth*.

Again, How came the *Air* which hath no *Deſign* in it ſelf to place it ſelf ſo *commodiouſly* as it hath done between the *Earth* and the *Heavens*? Why is there not a wide *vacuity* between? Or if ſome *Body* muſt needs *intervene*, why was it not *Fire* or *Water* as well as *Air*, which of all other Bodies is the moſt *commodious*? For had it been a *void Space*, there could have been no *Intercourſe* between *Heaven* and *Earth*; or had it been *filled* with *Fire* or *Water*, it would have *conſumed* or *drowned* the Earth and all things belonging to it;

but as for the Air which is a *thin, ſoft, fluid* and *tranſparent* Body, it is of all others the moſt *proper Vehicle* of the Celeſtial Influences. For what other *Body* is there that through ſuch a *ſtupendous* Diſtance could have conveyed down to us the *Light* and *Heat* of the Sun, with ſuch an *ineffable* Swiftneſs; or what other *Element* could have been ſo *proper* for Animals to *move* and *breath* in? Since therefore this Space between the Earth and Heavens might have been ſupplied with other *Bodies*, but with none ſo *fit* as Air, which yet is no way *conſcious* of its own Fitneſs, and ſo cannot be ſuppoſed to *chooſe* this Space for it ſelf, it is a plain *Evidence* that there was a *wiſe* Mind *without* it that *choſe* this Habitation *for* it.

AND now we are come down to this *terreſtrial Globe* which conſiſts of *Earth* and *Water*, let us briefly conſider the admirable Uſe of *both*, and of all things *appertaining* to them. How came the *ſenſeleſs* Water to bore *Holes* and *Channels* in the Banks of the Ocean through long *Tracts* of Earth, and *againſt* its own Nature to *climb* up to the tops of Mountains, that ſo it may be able not only to run down *again* with *Eaſe*, but alſo to carry it ſelf to ſuch *Heights* afterwards, as the Neceſſities of *Men* and *Beaſts* require, and to

unite

unite into large *Rivers* that run into all the *inland* Parts of the Earth, watering both *them* and their *thirſty* Animals all along as they *go*, till *at laſt* they *return* into the Ocean again? How comes this *dull* and *ſenſeleſs* Element that can conſult neither its *own* Convenience nor that of *other* Beings, to be *ſalt* where it is convenient for *it ſelf* to be *ſalt*, *viz.* in the *Ocean*, by which it is preſerved from *Putrefaction*; and *freſh* where it is convenient for *other* Beings that it ſhould be *freſh*, *viz.* in the *Fountains* and *Rivers*, that ſo it may be fit to *fructify* the *Earth*, and be a *wholeſom* Drink for its *Animals*? How come ſo many *Rivers* and *Fountains* which do all ariſe from the *ſalt* Waters of the *Sea*, to be *ſtript* of their *ſalt* Particles, by ooſing through the Pores of the Earth, and *thereby* to be rendred both *fruitful* to the *Ground* and *wholſom* for *Men* and *Beaſts*? How comes it to paſs that ſo many *Clouds* as are *drawn up* out of the *ſalt* Ocean, ſhould in their *Aſcent* ſo far *ſhake off* their *Salt* as to *deſcend* back again upon the Earth in *ſweet* and *freſh* Showers? And how come thoſe *Vapours* of which the *Clouds* conſiſt, and which are much *thicker* and *heavier* than the Air, to be drawn *aloft* as they are by the *Rays* of the *Sun*, which have neither *Pumps* nor *Buckets* to *exhale* them? And when they

they *are* aloft in the *Air*, how come they to *gather* into *thick* Clouds, and not rather to *diſperſe* themſelves about in that vaſt *Expanſum*, or to *return* back again to the Earth in thin Vapors as they *aroſe*; and while they *hang* in the Air, what is it that *ſuſteins* their *Weight*, and when they *fall*, how comes it to paſs that they ordinarily fall in *ſoft* and *gentle* Showers that *water* the *Roots* of the *Graſs* and *Corn* without any Prejudice to their *Stalks* and *Blades*, and not rather in *Miſts* or *Streams*, which either would be *inſufficient* to moiſten the Earth, or *lay waſt* its Corn and Fruit with the *Violence* of their *Fall*? All which are *illuſtrious* Inſtances of a *wiſe* and *powerful* Providence, that *directs* and *orders* this *ſenſeleſs* Element, and cauſes it ordinarily to *move* and *act* as if it had Wiſdom in *it ſelf* and did therewithal *induſtriouſly* conſult the *publick good* of the World; but this Argument you may find handled more at large in a late excellent Treatiſe *de Deo*.

AND now we are arrived to the *Earth* whereon we live and move and have our Beings, which tho it ſelf be of a *broken* and *irregular* Figure, and ſeems to be rather the *mighty Ruins* of ſome more *beautiful* Structure, than an *original Effect* of the divine *Art* and *Contrivance*, yet contains

tains in it the moſt *amazing* Inſtances of an *alwiſe* and *alpowerful* Providence. For how came this *dull* and *ſtupid* Lump to be *impregnated* with ſuch an infinite *Variety* of *ſeminal Vertues*, all which do proceed as *orderly* and *artificially* in the Formation of their *Plants* and *Fruits*, as if they were every one endued with a moſt *wiſe* and *intelligent* Mind? For ſince the Plants do all *derive* their *Nouriſhment* from the *inward* Parts of the Earth, it is neceſſary that ſome Parts of them ſhould be *buried* under Ground, that ſo they may *come* at their *Food*; and that *theſe* Parts ſhould be fitted with *ſpongy ſtrings* to *faſten* them to the Earth, and to *ſuck in* thoſe Juices of it whereon they *feed*; and accordingly the *ſeminal Vertue* of every Plant firſt *forms* it ſelf a *Root* under Ground, which runs out *more* or *leſs* from the Centre of it into *greater* or *ſmaller* Strings *proportionable* to the Magnitude of the Plant it bears, that ſo how *great* ſoever it be it may by theſe *Strings* be ſo *faſtned* to the Earth, as that the Wind to which its *upper* Parts are expoſed, may not be able to *tear* them *up*; then this *ſeminal Form* whatſoever it be, *digeſts* theſe Strings into a *porous* and *ſpongy* Subſtance fit to *ſuck* in the Juices of the Earth on every ſide, and bores little

Holes

Holes or ſtrait *Fibres* through them from one end to the other, that ſo by theſe *Conduit-pipes* they may all *convey* the Juices they *imbibed* into the Centre of the Root; and having thus *formed* its Root, and by theſe Strings or nervous Filaments *ſupplied* it with plenty of Juice, by ſtrange myſterious Art it *concocts* the *liquid* Matter into a *hard* and *ſolid* Subſtance, through which it alſo bores an infinite number of *ſtrait* Fibres from the very *Centre* of the Root, to *convey up* with it thoſe Juices that are lodged *there*, with the *thicker* Parts of which it *nouriſhes* and *increaſes* its more *ſolid* Subſtance, thruſting forth the *thinner* towards the *Surface*, and the *thinneſt* at the *Extremities* of its *Branches*; the *former* of which it *digeſts* into a *Bark* wherewithal it *cloaths* the *tender* Body of its Plant, to *defend* it againſt the Violences of *Heat* and *Cold*; the *latter* into *Leaves*, and therewithal *adorns* its Branches, and *ſhelters* its Fruit from the *ſcorching* of the the Sun, and the exceſſive *Moiſture* of the Rain; and by thus *diſtributing* the *ſtill-riſing* Juices, it ſtill *encreaſes* its Plant till ſuch time as it arrives to its *full* growth and Maturity; ſo that from the *utmoſt Strings* of the *Root*, to the *Centre* of it, from the Centre of the Root to the *higheſt*

Branches

Branches of it, from the Branches to the *Leaves* and *Fruit* of it, theſe *porous Fibres* run on, by which every part how *diſtant* ſoever from the Root, *ſucks up* its Juices and *digeſts* them into its own Subſtance; for even the *Leaves* and *Fruit* are hung upon the Branches by *little*, *ſoft* and *Spongy* Stalks, through which there run innumerable *Fibres* that convey the *Juice* from the *Branches*, and by ſtupendous Art *diſtribute* it by their Pores through all the whole Body of the Leaves and Fruit. But then by what *particular* Art the *ſeminal Vertues* of each *particular* kind doth ſo *conſtantly* and *regularly* concoct and elaborate the Juices of the Earth into their own *ſpecifick* Smells and Taſts, and Figure and Colours, is a Myſtery that *confounds* and *puzles* all our Philoſophy. Now whence I beſeech you proceeds this *curious*, *inimitable* Art which we with all our Reaſon can neither *tranſcribe* nor *comprehend*? Not from the *things themſelves* ſure; for how can they have *Art* that have no *Reaſon*? And therefore of Neceſſity it muſt proceed from ſome *alwiſe*, *ſuperintending* Mind, that either immediatly *contrives* and *frames* them, or elſe *impreſſes* their ſeminal Vertues with its own *alwiſe* and *powerful*

Vide *Luſſius de Prov.*

powerful Art whereby they *contrive* and *frame* themſelves.

AND if in the Compoſure of every *Plant* there are ſuch *viſible* Footſteps of a *divine Art*, how much more of every *Animal*, whoſe Parts for infinite *Variety*, delicate *Smalneſs*, exquiſite *Shape*, *Poſition* and *Temper*, do as far excell the other, as the *Offices* for which they are deſigned? For tho the *plaſtick* Soul that forms the *Animal*, hath not the leaſt Ray of *Art* or *Reaſon* of its own, yet in the *Formation* of it, it proceeds with as much *curious* and *incomparable* Art as if it were endowed with the moſt *perfect* Reaſon. For firſt it Spins out the *thicker* Parts of the *ſeminal Matter* into little *Threds* or *Fibres*, part of which it hollows into *Pipes*, and part into *Spunges*, ſome whereof are more *thin*, and ſome more *ſolid*; all which with wondrous Art it *cuts* and *prunes* in divers places, *fitting* their Ends to one another, and in divers Manners *knitting* them together into a *well-proportioned* Structure of *Bones* and *Members*; then of the *thinner* Parts of the ſeminal Matter it forms the *Intrails*, *viz.* the *Liver* and *Heart* and *Brains*, drawing out from each certain Fibres to be framed into *Veins*, and *Arteries* and *Nerves*, for which End it

bores

bores and *hollows* them through, *extends* and *ſtretches* them out at length, and *divides* them into innumerable *Branches*, which it ſpreads through *all* the Intrails, and thereby maintains a mutual *Communication* between them, and derives the *Nouriſhment* and *animal* and *vital* Spirits through all the Body; and having thus *ſpun* the ſeveral Parts out of the ſeminal Matter, and curiouſly *woven* them together, it *concocts* the remainder of the Matter which is ſtill ſupplied with new Nouriſhment into the *Subſtance* of thoſe ſeveral Parts, and this in ſuch *preciſe* and *regular* Proportions, as to form *every one* of them, tho infinitely *various* from one another, into its own *proper* Figure, and Meaſure, and Proportion; ſo that within ſeven days after the Conception, the whole Body is entirely *framed*, and *diſtinguiſhed* into all its proper *Parts* and *Members*, which though they are ſo vaſtly great in their *Number*, ſo ſtrangely different in their *Size* and *Figure*, ſo infinitely various in their *Motions* and *Tendencies*, do all contribute one way or other to the *Beauty* and *Benefit* of the *Whole*; ſome to propagate the *Kind*, others to preſerve the *Individual*, others to diſtinguiſh what is *neceſſary*, *convenient* and *pleaſant* from what is *dangerous*, *offenſive*

or

or *deſtructive* to its Nature; ſome to *purſue* what is *good*, others to *ſhun* what is *evil*, others to *enjoy* thoſe *goods*, and others to *defend* it againſt thoſe *evils* that *threaten* or *invade* it; ſo that of all theſe infinitely *numerous* and *diverſe* Parts, not one can be *wanting* or *defective* without ſome conſiderable *Damage* to the Whole. How then is it conceivable that ſuch an infinite number of *different* Animals, which are all ſo *perfect* in their *Kind*, ſo amazingly *curious* in their *Compoſition*, as that we with all our Reaſon can diſcern nothing in them that is either *ſuperfluous* or *defective*, nothing in their *Figure* that is *irregular*, nothing in their *Poſition* that is *miſplaced*, nothing in their *Motion* that is *exorbitant*; ſhould all of them be framed by their ſeveral *Plaſtick Souls*, which are utterly *blind* and *irrational*, without the *Conduct* and *Direction* of an *all-wiſe* and *all powerful* Providence? Should you behold a *confuſed* Heap of Earth, and Stone, and Iron and Timber without any *viſible Artificer* near it, fall a *polliſhing* its own Parts, *fitting* them to one another and *diſpoſing* them into Order according to the Rules of Architecture, and at length *frame* them all together into the Form of a moſt beautiful Palace, would you not conclude that ſome *skilfull* Mind were

were *invisibly* present there, and did *work* upon this *senseless* Heap, and *dispose* its Parts into this *comely* Order? And yet in the Composure of any one *Animal* there is infinitely *more* Art than in the most beautiful *structure* in the World. How then can we imagine that the *blind*, *artless* Matter of which it is composed, could ever have *framed* it self into this *admirable* Form and Contexture, had not some *great* Mind been *invisibly* present at the Composition of it, or at least imprinted on its *artless* Mattter, some powerful Signature of its own *wise* Art to *direct*, and *order* and *contrive* it.

I might from hence have proceeded to the formation of *Man*, the Masterpiece of all this lower Creation, in whose *Frame* and *structure* there are such Miracles of Art as do outreach both the *Imitation* and *Wonder* of the most *raised* and *comprehensive* Minds. For who can sufficiently admire the *skilful* Contexture of his *Corporeal* Parts, which though almost infinite in *Number* and *Variety*, do not only compose a Body of a most amiable *Symmetry* and *Proportion*, but are also as exactly *framed*, and *tempered* and *adapted* to perform the Offices of Life and Motion, and Sense and Reason, as Art or Wit can *fancy*

or *imagine* them? But then how much more admirable is the *Soul* which *inhabits* and *animates* this Body; for of whatsoever Substance this thing we call our Soul is, it is evidently framed for *great* and *noble* Operations, to *disclose* the Mysteries of Nature, and to *dive* into its deep Philosophy, to *penetrate* into the Causes of things, and with its *nimble* and *sagacious* Thoughts to *survey* this ample Theatre of Beings; to *recollect* things past, and to *foretel* things to come, to *invent* the most useful Arts and comprehensive Sciences, to *dictate* good Laws, and *project* wise Policies for the Government of Humane Societies, and in a word, to *understand* the right Reasons of things, and to *regulate* its Will and Affections by them: And is it possible we should imagine a Being thus *exquisitely* framed to be the Product of a *blind* and *artless* Matter, to be nothing but a *lucky* Jumble of *senseless* and *irrational* Atoms? For suppose it were nothing but *elaborated* Matter, yet certainly it requires infinite Art and Skill to *contrive* and *fashion* it into all those curious Springs, and Wheels and Mechanick Knacks that are necessary to render it not only a *living* and *feeling*, but also a *wise* and *rational* Matter. For how is it conceivable that a little Drop of Water

Water without the Aſſiſtance of any *Mind* or *Providence*, ſhould form it ſelf not only into all the Parts and Lineaments of a Humane *Body*, but alſo into a Humane *Mind*, a Mind of *vaſt* Deſires and *infinite* Capacities of Knowledg, that can form Ideas *within* it ſelf of every thing that is round *about* it, and from them can frame *innumerable* Propoſitions, and *deduce* them into Arts and Sciences: and in a word, that can move it *ſelf* and the *Body* it lives in, by its own *internal* Springs, and *form* it ſelf into ſo many *various* and *contrary* Affections by the myſterious *Force* and *Energy* of its own Reaſon and Diſcourſe? If you beheld a *dead* Pencil *move* without any *viſible* Hand, and *dip* it ſelf into *various* Colours, and *draw* but an exact Picture of a Man, you would doubtleſs conclude either that ſome *inviſible* Limbner had *infuſed* into it the Art of Limbning, or did immediately *manage* and *direct* it. But ſhould you find this Picture when it is *drawn* and *finiſhed*, not only *live* and *move*, but *reaſon* and *diſcourſe*, and exert all ſorts of *Animal* and *Humane* Operations, could you imagine that ever the *blind*, *irrational* Pencil formed it of *it ſelf* without being *managed* or *directed* by ſome *ſuperiour* Mind or Providence?

AND thus I have given ſome brief Inſtances of the conſtant Direction of all ſorts of things, how *ſtupid* and *irrational* ſoever, to ſome *wiſe* and *good* End, which is a plain *Evidence* of an *univerſal Providence* over the World, that in a *conſtant* and *uniform* Series directs things to their proper *Ends* that have no *Aim* or *Deſign* of their own, and ſo are utterly uncapable to *guide* and *direct* themſelves.

II. ANOTHER *ſenſible Evidence* of a *divine Providence* is, the *ſagacious Providence* of things that have no *Foreſight* in themſelves. For among irrational Beings that can neither apprehend *for* what *Ends* they act, nor *by* what *Means* they may beſt effect them, how ſtrange is it to conſider with what *Inſight* and *Providence* they many of them act in *ſtoring up* Proviſions for themſelves againſt a time of Extremity, in *framing* their own Beds and Neſts, and *defending* themſelves and their Young againſt approaching Dangers; in *educating* their Young, and propagating their Kind through all ſucceeding Generations, inſomuch that if they were every one endued with Reaſon of their own to *foreſee* their own Dangers, and *forecaſt* their own Conveniency and Safety, they would not act with more *Skill* and *Sagacity* than they

they do. For thus the *Plants* that have neither *Senſe* nor *Reaſon* to diſcern the Periods of their own Growth and Decay, when they have almoſt ſpent themſelves, and are ready to *wither* and *die*, run up into Seed, as if they *foreſaw* their own *approaching* Fate, and did thereupon *bethink* themſelves of *propagating* their Kind before it be *too late*, and leaving a numerous *Poſterity* behind them. And therefore ſince they have neither Thought nor Forecaſt *in themſelves*, 'tis evident that there is a Providence that *thinks* and *forecaſts* for them.

Thus alſo thoſe Plants that ſhoot up *on high*, but are too *weak* to ſupport themſelves, ſuch as the *Hop* and *Vine* and *Ivy*, run out into little *ſtrings* or *tendrils* with which they *lay hold* upon ſome body that is *ſtronger* than themſelves, as if they were *conſcious* of their own weakneſs, and ſo to *prop up* themſelves did *deſignedly* twiſt about thoſe ſtronger bodies that are beſt able to *ſupport* them. And therefore ſince they neither know their own *weakneſs*, nor yet the *ſtrength* of the *Trees* or *Wall* they depend on, it is evident that there is a wiſe Providence that knows *both*, and *guides* and *directs* them to their ſafety.

And as there is a viſible Providence over *Plants*, ſo there is alſo over *brute* and *irrational* Animals, and eſpecially over the *ſmalleſt* and moſt *contemptible*, who by reaſon of their natural *weakneſs* and *impotence* are leſs able to provide for themſelves. For thus the Spider is a Creature as void of *Reaſon* as the Plant of *Senſe*, and yet with what *wondrous* Art doth he ſpin his Web out of a *viſcous* matter within his own Bowels? He *extends* the threads of it croſs to one another, leaving equal Angles in the middle, *faſtning* the extreme to the oppoſite threads, and then leaſt through the weakneſs of the ſlender threads of which it is compoſed the Fly he hunts ſhould happen to break through, he weaves ſeveral *under-nets* one within another, and with a wondrous Art *faſtens* them all together, that ſo if *one* ſhould fail, the *other* might hold; and when he hath thus fix'd and ſpread his *ſubtile* and *ſtrange-contrived* Snares, he lies in wait in a little Den without, made by him on purpoſe to *conceal* himſelf; from whence, as ſoon as the Fly is *entangled*, he ſwiftly *runs* and *ſeiſes* it, and having *killed* it carries it away and lays it up in a ſafe Repoſitory againſt a time of Famine. In all which performance this *irrational* Inſect proceeds

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as *providently* and *wiſely* as if in a long deduction he had inferr'd one thing from another and acted upon the moſt *rational* deliberation; and therefore ſince he is void of reaſon *himſelf*, and doth not determine himſelf by any natural Logic of *his own*, he muſt proceed by the reaſon and direction of ſome *wiſe* Mind *without* him, that hath the *guidance* and *diſpoſal* of his motion. For he begins not to exerciſe his Art after he is arriv'd to a *riper* age, but is *born* with his Trade about him, and *ſpins* and *weavs* from his very Infancy; nor is there any *diverſity* in his Manufacture, as there uſeth to be in thoſe of *rational* Artificers, but 'tis always woven in the ſame *manner*, and *figure*, and *faſhion*, which is a plain evidence that he effects it not by any *art* or *reaſon* of *his own* but by mere *natural inſtinct*, which is nothing but the *impreſſion* of the art and reaſon of the *Author* of Nature, which impreſſion knows not what it *doth*, nor upon what *reaſons* it proceeds, but only *anſwers* to the *Reaſon* of God as the *ſignature* doth to the *Seal* that impreſt it, and like an Eccho *articulates* and *reſounds* his Voice without *underſtanding* what it *means*. And as the *ſenſleſs* Eccho when it *reverberates* words that carry *Senſe* and *Reaſon* in them, ſuppoſes the

original Voice to proceed from ſome *intelligent* Mind; ſo theſe *irrational* Inſtincts of Nature which expreſs ſo much *art* and *reaſon* in their operations, do neceſſarily imply that there is ſome *wiſe* Mind or Providence to which they owe their *original* and *continuance*.

FOR thus to inſtance farther, with what a *ſtrange* and *wonderful* Art do the *Bees* frame their *Combs*, which they divide on each ſide into a world of little *ſix-corner'd* cells, and then prop them up with *middle* walls of pillars which they raiſe from the floor into an arch, by which as they are rendred more *ſtrong*, ſo the Bees have an entrance through to *repair* them whenever they *decay*; and having thus artificially *built* their houſes, with what *induſtry* do they wander to and fro to gather the *ſweet* dews of Heaven, whereon they live, from the *herbs* and *flowers* of the field, and with what care do they *treaſure* them up in thoſe little cells againſt *winter*, when they can neither go *forth* by reaſon of the *cold* to *ſeek* their ſuſtenance abroad, nor yet *find* it if they *could*; and when they have fill'd their cells with their winter proviſion, they *providently* draw over the mouth of them a thin skin or membrane to *preſerve* the grateful liquor

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leſt it ſhould *drop out* and be *loſt*; and in a word, in what a regular order do they *live*, they *reſt* and *labour* all together, and in the diſcharge of *ſeveral* offices conſpire to the *ſame* work; ſome *preſs* the flowers with their feet, others with their mouths or down of their bodies gather up the *moiſtures* which theſe *preß out* and carry them home to their cells; ſome bring home the *materials* of which theſe cells are compos'd, others *disburthen* them of it, others *build* with it, and others *plane* and *poliſh* the building. Thus all hands are at work firſt to *build* the houſe they are to dwell in, and to *divide* it into its ſeveral apartments, and then to *ſtore* them all with proviſion againſt the enſuing time of ſcarcity. Now therefore (not to mention their wondrous *polity* and *government* of which ſo many curious obſervations have been made) how is it poſſible they ſhould do all theſe things with ſo much *regularity* and exact *order*, without being guided by ſome *art* and *reaſon*? But yet 'tis certain 'tis not by any reaſon of *their own*; they do not at all *conſider* when they build, how *needful* houſes are for themſelves and their Winter proviſions, nor how *convenient* that waxy matter which they gather is to build *thoſe* houſes, nor what

what neceſſity there is of *dividing* them into *diſtinct* cells and apartments; they *underſtand* not the nature of thoſe ſweet dews which they gather, whether they are *food* or *poiſon*, and when they gather more than they have preſent need of they *know* not *why* they do it, they *reaſon* not with themſelves that Winter is approaching, wherein neither theſe *dews* will *fall* upon which they live, nor themſelves be able to go forth and *gather* them, and that therefore it behoves them to *ſtore* themſelves beforehand againſt the *enſuing* famine; and when that they have laid up their ſtore and are binding it in with the membrane they draw over it, they do not conſider that 'tis a *fluid* matter that will be apt to *run out* and be *loſt*; and yet all theſe things they *perform* with as much *regularity* and *art*, as if they had throughly *weigh'd* and *conſidered* and perfectly *underſtood* the reaſons of them; which is a plain evidence that they are acted by a *reaſon* that is not *their own*, and what *other* reaſon can this be than that of the *divine* mind which *governs* and *diſpoſeth* all things? And the ſame may be ſaid of *Ants*, and *Moles* and *Palmer-worms* and innumerable other animals, which though they have no reaſon of *their own*, are yet in many inſtances as evi-

evidently conducted by *reaſon* as any *rational* beings whatever.

For with what *admirable* art do the *irrational* Birds form their *neſts* a little after their *coupling*; they begin to *build* though they neither *conſider* that they are *breeding*, nor yet do *foreſee* when they ſhall *lay*; by which it's plain that there is a Providence which *conſiders* and *foreſees* for them; and though they *underſtand* not what materials are *fitteſt* to build their neſts nor in what order to *frame* and *diſpoſe* them, yet there is a very *wiſe* underſtanding that *directs* them both to *chooſe* and *contrive* the materials, and this with greater *art* than *we* with all our *reaſon* can do. For as for the *outward* ſurface of the neſts which comes not near their bodies, they frame it with *ſticks* and *thorns* which with *inimitable* art they *twiſt* and *interweave* into a *round* and *uniform* hollowneſs, which they commonly dawb round with mud to render it more *compact* and *warm*; when this is done though they *underſtand* not their own *ſpecific* frame and conſtitution, yet they proceed as if they *did*, and ſuit their neſts to the *ſtrength* or *weakneſs* of their natures; for thoſe of them that are of a *hardier* make content themſelves with this *inward* plaiſtering, and when 'tis dry-

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ed proceed to *lay* and *hatch* their eggs on it, without troubling themſelves to *line* it with any *ſofter* materials, as if they knew *beforehand* that the conſtitution of their young would be ſuch as would not need any *ſoftneſs* or *delicacy*; whereas thoſe that are of a *tenderer* frame take care to cloath the *hard* plaiſtering with *ſtraw* or *hay* or *moſs*, upon which thoſe that are *tendereſt* of all make another layer of *hair* or *down* or *feathers*, as if they perfectly *underſtood* what degree of *ſoftneſs* and *warmth* would be neceſſary for the preſervation and nouriſhment of their tender off ſpring. Since therefore it's certain that they *know* none of all theſe things, and yet they act as if they *did*, they muſt neceſſarily be ſuppoſed to act by the *direction* of ſome *wiſe* Mind that perfectly knows them all. And then again conſidering with what *patience* and *diligence* the female ſits upon her eggs when ſhe hath *laid* them, as if ſhe *underſtood* the pliloſophy of her own *warmth*, how neceſſary it is to *form* and *animate* and *hatch* them, and with what *care* and *induſtry* the male brings her in proviſion whilſt ſhe is *ſitting*, that ſo ſhe may not be forc'd by the neceſſities of Nature to *neglect* her eggs and *leave* them too long expos'd to the cold air which in a ſhort

a ſhort time would deſtroy the *tender* principles of life *within* them; and in a word, with what *care* and *induſtry* they both conſpire to *cheriſh* and *feed* their young when they are *hatch'd*, till ſuch time as they are *cloath'd* and *fledg'd* and can fly abroad to ſeek proviſion for themſelves; conſidering, I ſay, how in all theſe things they proceed as if they perfectly *underſtood* the *reaſons* and *neceſſities* of their own actions, it's plain that they muſt be *guided* either by a reaſon in *their own* or in ſome *other* mind that hath the *command* and *conduct* of their motions. Now that it is not by a reaſon of *their own* is evident, becauſe whatſoever they do, they *neceſſarily* do, and cannot poſſibly do *otherwiſe*, for they never *vary* in their operations, never try any *new* experiments, but always proceed in the *ſame* road and *repeat* the ſame things in the *ſame* method, which is a plain ſign that they cannot do *otherwiſe*, and conſequently that they act not from *reaſon* but *neceſſity*; and therefore ſince they are *made* and *impelled* to act as they *do*, and yet do act ſo *rationally* and *wiſely*, that which *impels* them muſt be a *rational* mind either acting upon them *immediately*, or by a *fix'd* and permanent impreſſion of its *art* and *reaſon* on their motions. For

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as *Ariſtotle* hath long ſince obſerv'd ὅτι τέχνῃ ὅτι ζητήσει ὅτι βουλευσάμενα ποιεῖ, *they do theſe things neither by any art nor council nor deliberation of their own.* They are not *maſters* of the wiſdom *by* which they act, but are meerly *paſſive* to the impreſſions of that wiſdom, that are made *upon* them. For ſo men we ſee for their own *profit* and *others* pleaſure can teach Dogs and others animals to *dance* the *meaſures* of *tunes* and other *artificial* motions, the *rules* and *ends* of which they underſtand not; for when they perform *theſe* motions, they neither *think* of their maſters *profit* nor the ſpectatour's *pleaſure*, which is the *end* and *deſign* of them, nor underſtand the *proportions* of *muſick* which is the *rule* of them, ſo that the reaſon of their motions is only in their teachers mind, who by frequent *uſe* doth by degrees *imprint* the practice of his art upon their *fancies*; and if a *man* can ſo imprint his art upon theſe *artleſs* creatures, as to make them practice it *without* underſtanding either the *grounds* or *reaſons* of it, how much more may an *allwiſe* and *Almighty* mind. And therefore ſince *de facto* we behold a world of *curious* art among brute animals, that far exceeds all the *little* feats *we* can teach them, why may we not as reaſonably believe,

lieve, that any one of theſe *dancing* animals learnt all his *artificial* motions, the reaſons of which he *underſtands* not, without any *arts-maſter* to teach him, as that *Ants* and *Bees* acquir'd all the *art* and *Providence* they practice, without either *diſcovering* the reaſons of it by any underſtanding of *their own*, or being ever *inſtructed* in it by any *other* provident mind; for *art* and *providence* cannot be ſuppoſed without *reaſon*, and therefore ſince the *reaſon* of their art is not *in themſelves*, it muſt neceſſarily be in *ſome* mind *without* them that hath the *conduct* and *direction* of all their motions.

III. ANOTHER *ſenſible evidence* of a divine *Providence* is the mutual *agreement* and *correſpondency* of things that have no underſtanding *of themſelves* or of *one another*. For if we look abroad into the World we cannot but obſerve an admirable *harmony* among things which yet have no kind of *knowledg* of *one another*, and therefore cannot be ſuppoſed to have *framed* and *adapted* themſelves to one another, nor yet to be ſo fram'd and adapted, but by the Art and contrivance of ſome very *wiſe* and *intelligent* Mind. For how can any cauſe *fit* any *two* things to *one another* without having ſome Idea in his mind of the natures

of

of them *both*? If therefore in the nature of things we can diſcover a world of *mutual* ſuitabilities, of *this* to *that* and of *one* thing to *another*, it will be a ſufficient argument that they *all* proceed from ſome *wiſe* Cauſe that had an *univerſal* Idea of their natures in his mind, and *ſaw* how *ſuch* a thing would ſuit *ſuch* a thing, before ever he *actually* adapted them one to another.

Now not to inſiſt any further upon the admirable fitneſs of the *Sun* and *Earth*, the *Water* and *Earth*, the *Air* and *Heaven* and *Earth* one to another, which I have largely diſcourſed already, how exactly is every *animal* fitted for its *element*, and every *element* for its *animals*? Thus the *Birds* for inſtance, are fitted with *wings* to fly aloft in the *air*, and the *air* is fitted to *bear* them up, and to yield to the *vibration* of their wings: the *Fiſhes* are fitted to ſwim in the *water*, having *finns* which ſerve inſtead of *oars* to cut through and divide the ſtreams, and the *waters* are fitted for the *fiſh* to ſwim in, being a *ſoft* and *fluid* ſubſtance that is eaſily *cut* and *divided*; and as for the *earth* and thoſe *earthy* animals that inhabit it, there is an *admirable* congruity between them; for they being all fram'd to *walk* or *creep* muſt have

have an *hard* and *ſolid* matter to move on, and the *earth* being an hard and ſolid matter requires ſuch *animals* as can *walk* or *creep* on it; and as every *element* is fitted for the motion of its *animals*, and every *animal* to move in its *element*; ſo every element hath a *food* that is proper to the *appetites* of its *animals*, and, every animal an *appetite* that is proper to the *food* of its element. So that as every animal is fitted *within* with all thoſe *faculties* and *organs* that are requiſite to its *procuring* and *enjoying* what is *good* for it, and its *ſhunning* and *repelling* what is *hurtful*, ſo it is alſo furniſh'd *without* with all that is *neceſſary* or *convenient* for its *ſupport* and *ſatisfaction*. Thus every faculty *within* hath an object *without* prepar'd for it, that is exactly *correſpondent* therewith, without which, as hath been excellently obſerv'd, the *faculty* would become *vain* and *uſeleſs*, yea and ſometimes *harmful* and *deſtructive*, as reciprocally the *object* would import *little* or *nothing* if ſuch a faculty were not *provided for* and *ſuited* to it. For thus the *Eye* would be perfectly *uſeleſs* if it were not for the *light*, and the *light* would be much *leſs conſiderable* if it were not for the *Eye*; for if all *light* were extinguiſh'd, all thoſe *curious*

colours into which the light is *refracted* would be utterly *insignificant*; and if all those *colours* were extinguished, the *Eye* would be utterly depriv'd of one of its most *pleasant* entertainments. And what *use* would there be of all that infinite variety of *melodious* sounds, *fragrant* odours, and *delicious* savours which this frame of nature affords, were there no *hearing*, *smelling* or *tasting* faculties? and what would these *faculties* signifie were there no such *sounds* or *odours* or *savours*? So that these *objects* and *faculties* are all as *perfectly* fitted one to another as it was *possible* for *art* to fit them: nothing could be better fitted for *seeing* than the *eye*, nothing better fram'd to render things *visible* than the *light*, and light can be refracted into no colour so *grateful* unto the eye as *green*, which is the *great* colour of Nature; and the same may be said of the *ear* and *sounds*, the *smell* and *odours*, the *tast* and *savours*; and if the *eye* were made to *see* and the *ear* to *hear*, as there is no doubt but they *were*, being so exquisitely fram'd for that purpose; to be sure *light* was made for *seeing* and *sounds* for *hearing*, and so for all the rest; and how is it possible that so many things should be made so exactly *harmonious* and *agreeable* with one another without the powerful

art

art and *direction* of ſome very skilful mind, that knew before-hand that *this* thing would perfectly fit *that*, and conſequently had a perfect *Idea* of them both? When therefore we behold ſuch exact correſpondencies between the *motive* faculties of Animals and the *elements* they move in, between the *fruits* and *products* of thoſe Elements and the faculties of *taſt*, *digeſtion*, and *nutrition* in thoſe animals that inhabit them, and in a word between all *ſenſible* objects *without* and *ſenſitive* objects *within*, how is it poſſible we ſhould be ſo ſenſeleſs as not to trace out an *all-directing* wiſdom by footſteps that are ſo *expreſs* and *remarkable*? For ſuppoſe you heard a muſical Inſtrument move its own ſtrings into an *exquiſite* harmony and run long diviſions of *curious* and *well-proportion'd* notes, without the impulſe of any *viſible* Artiſt, would you not conclude either that ſome *inviſible* hand did immediately *touch* and *play* upon its ſtrings, or that they were mov'd by ſome *internal* ſpring and contrivance of a muſical mind? how then can we attend to the *admirable* harmonies of Nature, to the *natural* references and *due* proportions and *exact* correſpondencies of all its innumerable parts to one another without believing that there is

ſome great *harmonical* mind which *tun'd* it at firſt and ſtill *plays* upon it by the immediate *touch* and *impulſe* of its own *inviſible* hand.

AND as all things are thus *fitted* and *adapted* together, ſo are they alſo moſt regularly *ſubordinated* to one another according to their *rank* and *worth*; the *ſenſleſs* elements with all their *fruit* and *product* being ſubject to the uſe of *animals* to whom they afford a vaſt *variety* of all conveniencies and neceſſaries anſwerable to their *deſires* and *needs*; ſo that of all thoſe vaſt numbers of *ſenſitive* Beings there is no one *kind* or *individual*, no not ſo much as a *fly*, or *worm*, or *inſect* but what is plentifully ſupplied out of theſe common *ſtore-houſes* of Nature. And as the *elements* are ſubjected to the uſe of *animals*, ſo *both* are ſubject to the uſe of *Man*, who is as much ſuperiour to the brute animals, as *they* are to the ſenſleſs elements. To him therefore, as it is moſt *fit* and *congruous*, all things here below pay tribute; the Earth ingenders within its bowels quarrie's of *ſtone* and *mines* of *coal* and *mettals* to ſerve his neceſſary uſes and conveniences, and ſpreads its ſurface with a vaſt variety of *herbs* and *flowers* and fruitful *trees* to ſupply him with *food* and with *Phyſick*, and

and treat him with *pleaſure* and *delight*; to entertain his *eye* with beautiful *colours*, his *ſmell* with fragrant *odours* and his *palate* with delicious *ſavours*; the Waters ſerve to quench his *thirſt*, to dreſs his *food*, to fructifie his *fields* and *gardens*, to cleanſe his *body* and *habitation* and to maintain and facilitate his *entercourſe* and *traffick* with all parts of the World; the Air *fans* him with refreſhing *gales*, ſupplies him with *breath* and with *vital* and *animal* ſpirits; the Fire *warms* and *cheriſheth* him, *concocts* his meat and drink into *fit* and *wholeſom* nouriſhment, and ſerves him in his moſt *neceſſary* Arts and *manual* operations. And as all the four *elements* do one way or other conſpire to *our* uſe and benefit, ſo do all the *animals* too that inhabit them, though as yet there are *ſundry* of them whoſe uſe we have not *diſcovered*, but as for the *generality* of them they are innumerable ways adapted to our uſe; ſome to furniſh our Table with *food* and *delicacies*, others to *prevent* or to *remove* our Diſeaſes with their *medicinal* Vertues; ſome to *cloath* and ſome to *adorn* our Bodies, others to *aſſiſt* us in and others to *eaſe us* of our labours, and others to *entertain* us with chearful *ſports* and *recreations*. Thus all things here *below* have as plain a reference

to the uſe of Man who is the *nobleſt* part of them, as if ſome *wiſe* and *powerful* Mind had contriv'd *them* on purpoſe to *ſerve* and *beneſit* him; as on the contrary *Man* hath ſo plain a reference to *them* conſidering his *needs* and his *ſenſitive* and *rational* faculties, as if the ſame wiſe Mind had fram'd *him* on purpoſe to *uſe* and *enjoy* them.

AND is it poſſible that after all this we ſhould be ſo *ſtupid* as not to *diſcern* thoſe bright beams of *wiſdom* which ſhine through ſo many *perſpicuous* correſpondencies? For it's certain that either they muſt be *deſign'd* by *Wiſdom*, or *happen* by *Chance*; and is it poſſible that a *blind Chance* which can do nothing *regularly* and is the Parent only of *monſtrous* and *deform'd* births, ſhould thus exquiſitely *fit* and *adapt* things to one another in ſuch a *long* and *orderly* ſeries; that Chance which never yet compos'd a *tune* or wrote a *line* of coherent ſenſe ſhould ever be the Author of this great frame of things, in which there is more of *harmony* than in all the *muſical* compoſures, and more of *ſenſe* and *Philoſophy* than in all the *ſtudied* Volumes in the World? And if it cannot be the effect of Chance it muſt be the product of *Wiſdom* and *Providence*.

IV. ANO-

IV. ANOTHER *ſenſible evidence* of a divine *Providence* is the *continuation* of things in the ſame comely order which have no *government* of themſelves. That things are put into a moſt *uſeful*, *wiſe* and *artificial* order hath been ſufficiently demonſtrated under the foregoing particulars; now I would fain know *what* was it reduced them *to* and ſtill continues them *in* this order; did the *blind* parts of the matter whereof theſe things are compoſed, *once upon a time* as they were wandring through the field of infinite ſpace *becken* to one another, and by common *conſent* aſſemble themſelves into a *General Council*, and there *adviſe* together how they ſhould *rank* and *marſhal* themſelves into a World, and when upon *grave* and *mature* advice they had *agreed* upon, and *deſcrib'd* and *chalk'd* out the laws of their motion did they *break up* Council, and *ſet forth* in their ſeveral *lines* to the execution of their *Canons* and *Decrees*, till by their *oblique*, *parallel* and *contermotions*, they at laſt *interwove* themſelves into all thoſe beautiful *contextures* we behold? He who can imagine this to be either *probable* or *poſſible*, muſt himſelf be as *dull* and *ſtupid* as thoſe ſenſleſs parts of matter are, of which he *dreams*. Well then, ſince theſe things could not be effected by any

Council or contrivance in the matter *it ſelf*, was it by mere *chance* that theſe blind parts of matter *floating* in an immenſe ſpace, did after ſeveral *juſtlings* and *rancounters* jumble themſelves into this beautiful frame of things? alas, this is a conceit, if poſſible, more *ridiculous* than the former; for how is it poſſible to imagine that *Chance* ſhould ever make a *Man?* in the contexture of whoſe parts there are ſuch *wonders* of Art as do as far *exceed* the moſt *curious* Engines and Machines that ever humane Art *invented*, as the moſt *glorious* and *magnificent* Palace doth a Caſtle of *Cards*. And if Chance cannot ſo much as draw the *picture* of a Man, which is but a *rude* imitation of his *outſide*, how much leſs can it ſhape *Temper* and connect all thoſe *hidden* and *ſubtil* ſprings of *life* and *motion*, *ſenſe* and *imagination*, *memory* and *paſſion* within him? Well then, ſince it was neither from any *wiſdom* in the matter of them, nor from any caſual *motion* of that matter that this orderly ſeries of things did proceed, was it from a *blind* neceſſity? but pray what *made* this neceſſity? how came the *matter* of theſe things that might have mov'd *otherwiſe* having an infinite ſpace *about* it, and no principle *within it* to encline it *one* way more than *another*,

another, to determine it ſelf to *this* ſeries of motion? if you ſay it was by *Chance*, I have ſhew'd it is *impoſſible*; and if you ſay it was from *Eternity*, that is all one. For as an excellent Author of our own hath obſerv'd, Whether it were now, or yeſterday, or from Eternity infers no difference as to *our* purpoſe; not the *circumſtance* of the *time*, but the *quality* of the *Cauſe* being only here conſiderable; the ſame cauſe being alike *apt* or *unapt yeſterday* as *to day*, *always* as *ſometimes*, from all *Eternity* as from any *ſet-time* to produce ſuch effects. So that 'tis as *poſſible* for matter fortuitouſly moved without any Art or Council to compoſe a World *now*, and to frame it into *Animals* and *Men* as it was *from Eternity*; that is, 'tis from *all Eternity*, and *now* equally impoſſible; and if it were by the Council of ſome *intelligent* Mind that it was *fram'd* into this world of Beings and orderly ſeries of things, then it is doubtleſs by the ſame Mind that its order and harmony is ſtill *continued* and *preſerved*. For it is altogether as impoſſible for matter of it ſelf *unguided* by Wiſdom and Art to *purſue* any *conſtant* courſe, as to *fall into* any *regular* form, it being as we ſee all *torn* and *broken* into little parts innumerably *many*, and

and infinitely *diverſe* in their *ſize*, and *figures*, and *motions*, and thence onely fit in their ſeveral courſes to *croſs* and *confound* each other. How then is it poſſible without *vaſt* Wiſdom and *anſwerable* Power ſo to manage this *wild* and *diſordered* ſwarm of Atomes as to determine them to their proper *bounds*, continue them in their regular *ranks* and *files* and preſerve them in the ſame *tenure* of action, ſo as that in all thoſe new productions of the *individuals* of every *kind* of *Plants* and *Animals* which are every day compounded out of them, they ſhould none of them ever *extravagate* in their motions ſo as to *diſturb* and *hinder* one another, and finally *diſorder* and *interrupt* the natural courſe of Generation? When therefore we conſider how this great *Machine* of the World (as the above-cited Author expreſſeth it) whoſe parts are infinite for *number* and *variety*, hath ſtood ſix thouſand years together always *one* and the *ſame*, *unimpair'd* in its beauty, *unworn* in its parts, *unwearied* and *undiſturbed* in its motions; through what an *infinite* ſeries of generations and corruptions all its *plants* and *animals* have paſt, and yet how after they have been *corrupted* over and over, and their whole frames have been *broke* in pieces, and all their parts

parts *divided* and *diſpers'd*, they have ſtill been generated *anew*, and *rallied* into the ſame *ſpecifick* natures, which, though they ſtill conſiſt of *numberleſs* parts are conſtantly drawn up into the *ſame* poſtures and figures and poſitions, and with ſtrange *regularity* digeſted into the ſame *handſom* order, as if they all *kept time* with the *muſical* Laws of ſome Almighty Mind, as the ſtones of *Thebes* did with *Amphion*'s Lute, and thereby continually *danc'd* into their natural *figures*; When, I ſay, we conſider theſe *ſtrange* and *wondrous* things, what tolerable account can we give of the performance of them without an *over-ruling* Providence? For how is it imaginable that in a ſix thouſand years courſe of Generations and Corruptions theſe *blind* and *undeſigning* parts of matter, which by reaſon of their infinite *diverſity* are ſo naturally apt to *thwart* and *diſturb* one another, ſhould maintain ſuch *regular* courſes of motion as ſtill to *concenter* in the ſame forms, ſo as that through all this vaſt tract of time not ſo much as one kind *of plants* or *animals* ſhould *miſcarry*; how, I ſay, could this have been, had they not all along been conducted by a *ſteady* and *unerring* Providence?

V. ANO-

V. ANOTHER *Senſible evidence* of a Divine *Providence* is the *miraculous events* that have hapned in the World. By Miraculous Events, I mean ſuch as either for their *matter* or *manner* of production do exceed the Power of *natural Cauſes*, or at leaſt are produc'd by them out of their eſtabliſh'd *courſe* and *order*. Such as *dividing the Sea, ſtopping the Sun, raiſing the Dead, curing the ſick, and blind, and lame*, with a *touch* or *word*; of all which we have notorious inſtances both in the *Old* and *New* Teſtament, and theſe atteſted with as *full* and *convincing* Evidence as ever any matters of Fact were that are recorded in Hiſtory. For as for the Miracles of the *Old* Teſtament, beſides that they were ſundry of them *perform'd* in the publick view of Nations, and were *recorded* in thoſe very Ages wherein they were wrought, and ſo could have been eaſily *diſproved* by ten thouſand *living* Witneſſes had they not been *true*; beſides that they were atteſted by the moſt *antient* Heathen Poets and Hiſtorians in their *Mythologies* and *Hiſtories*, who to be ſure would never have yielded the glory of ſuch wondrous Effects to a Nation whom they *hated* and *deſpiſed*, had they not been forced to it by *undeniable* Evidence; In a word, beſides that they were

were *confirm'd* by the ſucceeding Prophets of that Nation, who both by the Miracles they wrought, and by the exact accompliſhment of their Predictions have ſufficiently *evidenc'd* themſelves to be *ſupernaturally* inſpired; Beſides all which, I ſay, the Miracles of the *Old* Teſtament are abundantly *atteſted* by the *New*, the credit whereof is *ratified* and *confirm'd* by a world of *new* Miracles wrought by our Saviour himſelf, and particularly by his *Reſurrection from the dead*, which are not only *in part* confeſſed by the *Jews* themſelves, his moſt *mortal* Enemies, and by the *Heathen* Writers who were *implacable* Perſecutors of his Religion, but alſo by his own *Diſciples* and *Apoſtles*, who, as I ſhall ſhew hereafter, were *Eye-witneſſes* of theſe Miracles, and did not only *atteſt* them with their *Mouths*, but alſo *ſealed* their teſtimony with their blood, and *confirm'd* it before all the World with infinite *other* Miracles which they wrought in his Name, and which they *continued* to work for ſeveral Ages together, as is evident not only from the *wondrous* ſucceſs of their *Miniſtry*, which without being atteſted with *ſuch* miraculous Effects could never have propagated in ſo *ſhort* a time ſuch an *hated* Religion over all the World, but alſo from the

the confident *Appeals* which the *Chriſtian* Writers frequently make to their *heathen* Enemies, in which they *Subpœna* them *in* as daily *Spectators* of their wondrous Works, and for the *truth* of them *challenge* their own *Eyes* and *Ears*. So then that there have been ſuch *miraculous Effects* can no more be *doubted* than that there have been ſuch Men as *Pompey the Great* or *Julius Cæſar*, the *former* being atteſted, all things conſidered, with much *more* Evidence than the *latter*.

AND if this atteſtation be *true*, there *muſt* be a Providence; for how is it poſſible that *blind* Nature which neither *deliberates* nor *chooſes*, ſhould of it ſelf ever *vary* or *interrupt* its courſe without ruſhing into utter *confuſion* and *diſorder*? How ſhould any *part* of it, when 'tis *once* moved either *faſter* or *ſlower* than ordinary, ſo *reſtrain*, or *quicken* its own motion as to reduce it ſelf back again to its *eſtabliſh'd* Courſe? For if it once move *faſter*, it muſt have ſome degree of motion *ſuperadded* to it, and till that is withdrawn it muſt move *faſter* for ever: if it move *ſlower*, it muſt have ſome degree of motion *withdrawn* from it, and 'till that be reſtored it muſt move *ſlower* for ever: how then is it poſſible that *Nature* or any *part* of

of it which moves by a *blind* neceſſity, ſhould of its own accord either *haſten* and then *ſlacken*, or *ſlacken* and then *haſten* the courſe of its motion, as it muſt do in the production of *miraculous* Effects, without being influenc'd by an *Almighty* Providence? We have ſeveral miraculous Inſtances of the *diverting* natural Cauſes *from* their courſe and *ſtopping* them *in* it; ſuch as cauſing the Waters to *divide* and *ſtand ſtill*, and the Sun to move *backward*. Now how is it conceivable that any *natural* Cauſe that hath no *will* of its own to *move* and *determine* it, ſhould either *ſtop* its own motion and then *move* again, or *divert* from its courſe and then *return* again, if it were not under the command of ſome will *without* it, that *guides* and *diſpoſeth* it according to its own Council? But beſides theſe *Scripture* Miracles, there are ſundry *miraculous* Inſtances of the *rewarding* good Men and *puniſhing* bad publickly recorded in the Hiſtories of *all Ages*; ſome of *vindicating* the *Innocence*, others of *reſtoring* the *lives*, others of *relieving* the *neceſſities* of good Men; ſome of *detecting* the *Crimes* of bad Men, others of ſtriking them dead in their *impious* facts, others of puniſhing them *in kind*, and others of *inflicting* on them thoſe very Plagues

Plagues which they have *imprecated* on themſelves to give *credit* to a *falſhood*; of ſome or other of which there is ſcarce any Age of the World which hath not been furniſhed with ſundry *notorious* inſtances; ſo that unleſs we will give the *Lye* to all *humane* teſtimony, and condemn the Records of all Ages for publick *Cheats* and *Impoſtures*, we cannot deny but that there have been ſundry Miracles in the World, and if of all theſe Miracles that have been ſo *ſtrongly* atteſted there be but any one *true* and *real*, that *one* is a *ſufficient* argument of an *over-ruling* Providence. For if *ever* any thing hath been effected that is either *above* the Power or *contrary* to the eſtabliſhed Courſe of natural Cauſes, it muſt be brought to paſs by the Power of *God*, and if God doth *ſometimes* viſibly exert his own *immediate* efficacy on this World, that is a plain evidence that he *always* governs it; for whenever he *thus* exerts it, it is for *ſome* reaſon to be ſure, and for *what* other reaſon ſhould he thus ſtrip his Arm and *viſibly* exert his Power *upon* or *before* us, but either to *awaken* our *attention* or to *confirm* our *faith*, or *alarm* our *fear*, or *encourage* our *hope*; and if *ever* he had any *ſuch* deſign upon us, it muſt be in order to his *governing* us; for to

to what other purpoſe can an *Almighty* Being be ſuppoſed to addreſs himſelf to *our* Hope and Fear, and Faith and Attention, but to *ſubdue* and *reduce* us under his Rule and Government.

VI. And laſtly, Another *viſible evidence* of a *divine* Providence is *Predictions* of *future* and *remote* contingencies. That there *have* been ſuch things hath been *univerſally* acknowledged by *Heathens* as well as *Jews* and *Chriſtians*. As for the Heathen, *Tully* gives numerous inſtances of it in his two Books of *Divination*; In the firſt of which he ſets down this as the great Principle of Prediction: *Eſſe Deos & eorum providentiâ mundum adminiſtrari eoſdemque conſulere rebus humanis, nec ſolum univerſis verum etiam ſingulis*, i. e. *That there are Gods, and that by their Providence the World is governed, that they take care of humane Affairs, and this not only in general, but in particular.* And of theſe Predictions he tells us there was one *Chryſippus* who wrote a large Book, in which he gives *innumerable* inſtances of them, *all* confirmed by very *good* Authority. Beſides which there were their *Oracles* and their *Sybilline Writings*, among which if there had not been a great many true Predictions, it is not to be imagined that ever the

wiſer and more *inquiſitive* part of Men ſhould be ſo far impoſed on as they were to pay ſuch a mighty *reſpect* and *veneration* to them, and that not only for a *little while*, but for ſeveral *Ages* together. But as for their *Oracles*, there are ſundry of them *recorded* in ancient Hiſtorians together with their *punctual* accompliſhments; and *Tully* in particular tells us of one of *Apollo* his Oracles which foretold a thouſand years before that *Sypſelus* the Tyrant ſhould reign at *Corinth*. And *Varro* makes mention of one *Vettius Valens* an Augur in the time of *Romulus*, who when *Rome* was building foretold by the flying of *twelve* Vultures that the City ſhould continue a thouſand two hundred years, which accordingly hapned. But as for the *reality* of Predictions we need ſeek no farther than the Holy Scriptures, in which you have ſundry *Propheſies* of things which hapned a long time *after*, as particularly of the deliverance of the *Jews* from thoſe *two* Captivities, the one in *Ægypt*, the other in *Babylon*; the *former* of which was foretold four hundred years, and the *latter* above ſeventy years before it came to paſs, and yet both of them accompliſhed *punctually* to a day, as you may ſee in *Gen.* 15. 13. compared

pared with *Exod.* 12.41. and *Jer.* 25. 12. compared with 2 *Chron.* 36. 21, 22. which *latter* Propheſie is not only *recorded* in Scripture, but mentioned by *Eupolemus* an heathen Hiſtorian cited by *Euſebius*, *Prepar.* pag. 454. Thus alſo you have *Eſay* his Propheſie of *Cyrus* whoſe name and atchievements he moſt *exactly* foretells long *before* he was born, *Eſay* 44.45. And then for *Daniel*'s Propheſies of the grand Revolutions of the Empires of the World, they do ſo *punctually* deſcribe what hapned long *after*, that *Porphyry* himſelf, though a mortal Enemy to Chriſtianity, is forced to *confeſs* the exact agreement of his *Propheſies* with the *ſucceeding* Events, *vid.* St. *Chryſoſt. cont. Jud. Tom.* 6. *p.* 326. and hath no other way to *evade* the force of them but by affirming without any colour of *Reaſon* or *Authority* that they were written *afterwards* in or near the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, though it is evident that the LXX Interpreters who tranſlated the *Old Teſtament* a hundred years before, tranſlated *this* Propheſie of *Daniel* with it. And *Joſephus* expreſly tells us, that *Jaddus* the High Prieſt ſhewed this very Propheſie to *Alexander* the Great, who lived long before *Antiochus*, *Joſeph. Antiqu. l.* 11. But to name no more, there

are the Propheſies of the Meſſias, of the *place* and moſt *particular* circumſtances of his *Nativity*, and *Miniſtry*, and *Life*, and *Death*, and *Reſurrection*, and *Aſcenſion*, all which were ſo punctually accompliſhed in our Bleſſed Saviour, that did not the Jews, in whoſe hands they have been always preſerved, *own* and *acknowledge* them, one would be apt to ſuſpect that they were *forged* on purpoſe by ſome Chriſtian to countenance our Saviours pretence of being the true Meſſias.

AND if there *be* any ſuch thing as Propheſie, if but any *one* of all theſe Inſtances be *real* (and that none of them ſhould, would be *very* ſtrange) this *one* will be a ſufficient evidence of a Divine Providence; for to foreſee things at a *diſtance*, and before their Cauſes are *in being*, ſo as to deſcribe before hand the preciſe *Time*, and *Place*, and *Manner* of their exiſtence, or to foreſee things *caſual* and *contingent*, that wholly depend upon the free choice and determination of *voluntary* Agents, requires a mind of *infinite* comprehenſion, that ſees through all the whole *Series of Cauſes*, and hath a perfect proſpect not only of thoſe things that *actually* exiſt, but alſo of all that are *future* and *poſſible*. For how is it poſſible to foreſee a *remote* futu-

rity

rity in all its *particular* Circumſtances, whoſe immediate Cauſe is either *unborn*, or *free* and *undetermined*, without having a *perfect* inſpection not only into the *natures*, and *inclinations*, and *tendencies* of things, but alſo into all their particular *Conjunctions* and *Conſpiracies*; and that Mind which ſees into all *theſe*, muſt needs be *all ſeeing* and have nothing *concealed* from it, that is either *preſent*, or *future*, or *poſſible*. So that if there be any ſuch thing as *Prediction* of *remote* and *contingent* futurities, it muſt neceſſarily proceed from an *all ſeeing* Mind; and if there be an all ſeeing Mind that *overſees* the whole World, and accurately *inſpects* all that is *paſt*, or *preſent*, or *to come* in it, is it imaginable that *ſuch* a Mind ſhould ſit looking on as an *idle* Spectator and *act* no part it ſelf in ſuch a *vaſt* and *buſie* Scene of thihgs? For that it thus exactly *inſpects* and *takes notice* of the World, is a plain Argument that it is greatly *concerned* for it; and that it ſhould be greatly concerned for it, and yet *do* nothing about it, nor *exerciſe* any *Providence* over it, is altogether *inconceivable*. And thus I have ſhewn, with all the *plainneſs* I could, what *Evidences* there are to create in us a *belief* of a *Divine Providence*, which I perſuade my ſelf are *ſuch*,

as *duly conſidered*, cannot but *prevail* with Minds that are not *ſteel'd* againſt *all* convictions, and utterly *abandoned* both of their *Reaſon* and *Modeſty*.

SECT. III.

The Objections *againſt Providence* conſidered *and* anſwered.

I Now proceed to the *third* and *laſt* thing propoſed to be treated of in this Chapter; and that is to ſhew the *Inſufficiency* and *Unreaſonableneſs* of the common *Pretences* to *Infidelity* in this matter; and here not to inſiſt upon all the *little* and *ſhameful* Cavils which have been made againſt Providence, which are ſo very *inconſiderable* that 'twould be too great a *Credit* to them to be ſeriouſly *confuted*; I ſhall inſiſt upon thoſe only which are the *common*, and do carry the *faireſt* ſhew of Reaſon with them, and they are theſe five:

1. That the Exerciſe of a Providence doth not *comport* with the *Majeſty* of God.

2. That

2. That it doth not *conſiſt* with the *Eaſe* and *Happineſs* of God.

3. That it is not *reconcilable* with the manifold *Evils* which we behold in the World.

4. That if there were ſuch a Providence, it could not admit of the *unequal* Diviſions of *Goods* and *Evils* which are made in *this* World.

5. That it is not to be reconciled with the *wretched* State and Condition to which we behold the greateſt part of Mankind *abandoned*.

I. It is objected againſt the Being of Providence, that it doth not *comport* with the *Majeſty* of God to take *notice of*, or *concern* himſelf about the *little* Affairs of this World. Which is *ſuch* an Objection as carries its own *Anſwer* with it; for I would fain know which is moſt *ſutable* to Majeſty, to *ſit ſtill* or to *act*, to *wrap up* it ſelf in everlaſting *Sloth* and *Idleneſs*, or to *diſplay* it ſelf in a *vigorous Activity*? And if it be *greater* and more *Majeſtick*, as doubtleſs it *is*, for any Being to *employ* and *exerciſe* its Powers, than to let them *lie aſleep* and make no *uſe* of them, I would fain know in what *higher Sphere* can God exerciſe his Powers than in *governing* the World. For to govern well is the *beſt*

and *greateſt* thing that we can frame an Idea of; 'tis to *do* the *greateſt* good, to *diſpenſe* the *nobleſt* Virtues, and to *ſhed forth* the *ampleſt* Sphere of Benefits. And therefore ſince the World is ſuch a *vaſt* Dominion, doubtleſs the moſt *glorious* Employment that the *largeſt* Mind can undertake, is to *rule* and *govern* it; and there is nothing can be *greater* and more *Godlike*, than to ſit at the *Helm* of this *floating* Univerſe, and *ſteer* its Motions to their Ends with a *ſteady* and *unerring* Hand. What therefore can God do more worthy of himſelf than to govern the World *well* and *wiſely*? Or wherein can he better *diſplay* the Glory of his *own* Perfections, than in keeping this *mighty* Engine in ſuch an admirable *Order*, ſo as that though its Parts are infinite in *Number* and *Variety*, and in their ſeveral Lines of Motion do frequenly *croſs* and *interſect* each other, yet do they neither *claſh* nor *interfere*, *diſturb* nor *confound* one another, but in their different Functions mutually *aſſiſt* each other, and all *conſpire* in a common Good, compoſing out of their infinite *Diſcords* a moſt elegant *Harmony*, in which mighty Performance there is ſcope enough for an infinite *Power* to *exert* its utmoſt *Activity*, for an infinite *Wiſdom* to

to *employ* its utmoſt *skill*, and for an infinite *Goodneſs* to *put forth* its utmoſt *Beneficence*.

So that to undertake this Province of *governing* the World, is ſo far from being *beneath* the Majeſty of God, that it would be an unpardonable *Arrogance* for any but a *God* to *undertake* it; and if *Contrivance* be the End of *Wiſdom*, *Action* of *Power*, *Beneficence* of *Goodneſs*, as doubtleſs they are, where can the infinite *Power*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs* of God find a more *ample* Sphere for *Action*, *Contrivance*, and *Beneficence* than in the *Government* of the World? And if it be the *proper* Exerciſe of Majeſty to *govern*, what can better *comport* with the *greateſt* Majeſty than to *diſplay* it ſelf in the Government of the *largeſt* Dominion, which is that of the World?

But then conſidering that God himſelf is the *Father* of all this great *Family* of Beings, how can it be *beneath* his Majeſty to *take care* of his own *Off-ſpring*? Why ſhould it be below him to provide for any thing which was not below him to *create*? If there be any thing in this World ſo *contemptible* as not to deſerve his *Regard*, why did he *create* it? If there be not, why ſhould he *diſdain* to *govern* it?

And

And if every thing in this World hath ſome *End* for the ſake of which God thought it *worthy* to be one of the *Objects* of his Creation, why ſhould he not as well think the conſtant *Direction* of it to that *End*, to be an Object *worthy* of his *Providence*?

II. IT is further *objected* againſt the Being of *Gods Providence*, that it is *inconſiſtent* with his *Quiet* and *Happineſs*. For to *attend* to ſuch an *infinite* number of things as the *Government* of the World includes, cannot but *diſtract* his Thoughts, and thereby *diſturb* him in the Injoyment of himſelf. All which is a *groſs* miſtake, ariſing from no other cauſe but our meaſuring *God* by *our ſelves*; becauſe we find our own Minds ſo *narrow*, and our own Powers ſo *limited*, as that we cannot without *Diſtraction* attend to *many* things *at once*, therefore we conclude that this *mighty* Buſineſs of *governing* the World muſt needs be very *uneaſie* to God. Whereas if we conſidered God as a Being that is *infinitely perfect*, whoſe *Almighty Power* implies an *Ability* to do whatſoever is *poſſible*, and whoſe *infinite Knowledge* includes an univerſal *Proſpect* of all things *paſt*, *preſent*, and *to come*, this would eaſily convince us of the *Vanity* and *Falſhood* of this

this Objection; for it is by reaſon of *Imperfection* that Beings operate with *Labour* and *Difficulty*; it is becauſe their Powers are *weak* and not *able* to conquer without *ſtrugling* the *Reſiſtances* of the Objects upon which they *operate*; but againſt *perfect* and *infinite* Powers there are no Objects can make ſuch *Reſiſtance* as to put them upon *ſtrugling* and *Labour*; ſo that to an *omniſcient* and *omnipotent* Mind there can be nothing difficult to be *known* or *effected*; and it is altogether as eaſie to it to *know* all things that are *knowable*, and *do* all things that are *poſſible*, as to know or do any *one* thing whatſoever; becauſe whatſoever it doth it doth *perfectly*. How then can the Government of the World be *difficult* or *uneaſie* to God, whoſe Knowledg and Power are *perfect* and *infinite*, and conſequently can *inſpect* and *govern* all the Beings in the World with as much *Facility* as if they had only *one* Being to take care of; and if *one* Man can with Eaſe manage *one* Buſineſs which he *perfectly* underſtands, why may not God manage *all* who underſtands all *better* than we underſtand *any one*; and ſuppoſe the things of the World were *infinite*, yet ſince Gods Knowledg and Power are *infinite too*, there is the very ſame Proportion of *Infinite* to *Infinite* as of *One* to *One*.

FOR

FOR it is to be conſidered that the natural *Tendency* of infinite *Power* is to *Action*, of infinite *Wiſdom* to *Contrivance*, of infinite *Goodneſs* to *Beneficence*; and how can we imagine that it ſhould be any *Diſturbance* to God to follow the *Inclination* of his own Perfections? And therefore ſince it is *equally eaſie* to his *infinite* Power, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs to exert themſelves in a *larger* Sphere of Action, Contrivance and Beneficence as in a *narrower*, why ſhould it more *diſturb* him to govern a *whole World*, than *one ſingle* Being? It would doubtleſs be *rather* a diſturbance to him to *act* nothing, to *contrive* nothing, and to do *no good*; becauſe this would be to *croſs* the Inclination of his own Perfections; but ſince it is *as eaſie* to him to exerciſe thoſe Perfections about *many* things as about *few*; to exerciſe them about a *world* of things muſt rather be a *Delight* than a *Diſturbance* to him, becauſe the more he *exerciſes* them, the more he *complies* with their natural *Tendencies* and *Inclinations*.

AND what though this World be a *great* and *cumberſome* Maſs of things; it can be no Labour to God to *move* and *actuate* it, who as an *univerſal ſoul* is diffuſed *through it*, and vitally *preſent* with every part

part of it; for he moves it not as *Bodies* move Bodies by *thrusting* and *pressure*, but as *Souls* move Bodies by *Thought* and *Will*; and as *our* Soul doth move its Body, and determine the Motion of its Members merely by *thinking* and *willing*, without any *material* Pressure, without any *Machines* or *Engines*, even so *God*, who is the *great Soul* of the World, doth *actuate* every Part, and *regulate* every Motion of it without any *laborious* heavings or thrustings, merely by the *all-commanding* Influence of his own *Almighty* Thought and Will. And if it be no Labour to *our* Soul to *think* and *will*, and therewithal to move our *Body*, why should we think it any Labour to *God* by the same *Operations* to move the *World*? For suppose *our* Soul were *clothed* with a Body as *large* as the *whole Universe*, and were but *vitally present* with every Part of it, it would doubtless *move* it *all* with as much *Ease*, and *command* it every way with as much *Freedom* as it doth the Body wherein it *now* resides; how then can it be *difficult* to a *perfect* Mind which *penetrates* all through, and *coexists* with every Part of this material World, to *move* and *actuate* the Whole, and *moderate* all the Motions of it according to its own *Will* and *Pleasure*?

III. It

III. IT is farther *objected* againſt a *Providence*, that it is not *conſiſtent* with the *manifold Evils*, both *moral* and *natural*, which we behold in this World. If there were a *juſt* and *gracious* Providence over-ruling the World, how can it be imagined that it ſhould ever *permit* ſo many *Irregularities* as we every day behold in Mens *Lives* and *Manners*, or ſuffer ſo many *Calamities* and *Miſeries* to befall its Subjects? *Both* which as I ſhall ſhew you are very fairly *conſiſtent* with a *juſt* and *righteous* Providence.

FOR as for the firſt, to wit, the *moral* Evils or Irregularities of Mens Manners, the *Permiſſion* of them in the World is no *more* inconſiſtent with the *Goodneſs* of Gods *Providence*, than his *making* of *free Agents* was with the *Goodneſs* of his *nature*. For his Permiſſion of *ſin* is no more than his permitting *free Agents* to act *freely*, and according to that *Liberty* to *Good* and *Evil* wherewith he *framed* and *created* them; and why may he not as well *permit* them to act freely as *create* them to act freely? But to be *eſſentially* determined to *good*, ſo as not to have any *natural* Liberty to *Evil*, ſeems *inconſiſtent* with the *State* of a *Creature*; for there is no *Will* can be *naturally* and *eſſentially* determi-

determined to good, which is not conducted by an *infallible* Mind; for whilſt the *Mind* which is the Guide may poſſibly *err*, the *Will* which is guided by it muſt be liable to *go aſtray*. Since therefore no *Will* can be *eſſentially* good but that which is *guided* by an *infallible* Mind, and ſince no Mind can be *eſſentially* infallible but one that is *omniſcient*, it neceſſarily follows that to be *free* to Good and Evil is as *natural* to all reaſonable Creatures, as to be *finite* in *Knowledge* and *Underſtanding*; and accordingly our Saviour declares that to be *naturally* and *eſſentially* good is the *incommunicable* Prerogative of the *divine Nature*, Luke 18. 19. and if *ſo*, then either God muſt have made us *free* to Good and Evil, or *not* have made us *at all*, and there muſt have been no ſuch Orders of Being as *Men* and *Angels*, which are the *Crown* and *Glory* of all the Creation; and is it not much *better* that there *ſhould* be *ſuch* Beings, than that there ſhould be *no* ſuch thing as *Liberty* to Good and Evil? And if it were not inconſiſtent with the Divine Goodneſs to *create* free Agents, why ſhould it be inconſiſtent with it to *permit* them to act *freely*? 'Tis true indeed *we* are naturally more *free* to Evil than the *Angels*, and *ſome* Angels perhaps were more free to it than

than *others*; but what then? Was God obliged in Goodneſs to make all Kinds of Beings *equally perfect*? If *ſo*, there muſt have been but *one* Kind of Beings in the whole Univerſe, and conſequently there muſt have been *infinite* Kinds of Beings that are *capable* of Happineſs for ever *unmade*, or for ever *unprovided for*. Wherefore ſince the Goodneſs of God was ſo infinitely *fruitful* as to *communicate* it ſelf in *different* Degrees of Perfection to all *Poſſibilities* of Being, that ſo there might be *no* Kind wanting to *compleat* the Univerſe, it was requiſite that there ſhould be a *mean* Degree of Perfection between *Angels* and *Brutes*; otherwiſe there would have been a *Gap* and *Chaſme* in the World, not only a *poſſible* Kind of Being *wanting*, but a Kind which by *partaking* both of *Reaſon* and *Senſe*, of *Spirit* and of *Matter*, is the Σύνδεσμος ζωτικὸς πρὸς τὰ ἄνω & πρὸς κάτω, as *Simplicius* expreſſes it, i. e. *the vital Joynt that claſps the upper and lower World together*; and if it were no way *unſutable* to the Goodneſs of God to create the two *Extremes*, viz. *Angels* and *Brutes*, why ſhould it be thought unſutable to make a *middle* Nature between them?

IT is true, by partaking of *both* Natures we are not only *free* to Evil *in common*

common with *Angels*, but also liable to *stronger* Temptations to it than they; because we are placed in a tempting *Body* among a great many brutish *Passions* and *Appetites*, and that Body is placed in a tempting *World* among a great many sensitive *Goods* and *Evils*, that are continually importuning *those* Appetites to *mutiny* against *Reason*, and to carry us away captive into *Folly* and *Wickedness*; but to place us in *this* state is so far from being *inconsistent* with the Goodness of God, that it is exactly *pursuant* to the *Design* of a most *wise* and *gracious* Providence. For since we are placed by the *Condition* of our *Natures* in a *lower* Rank of Being and Perfection than *Angels*, we have no more reason to complain of *that*, than *Ants* or *Flies* have that they are not *Men*. But in this *imperfect* state the *highest* good that Providence could *design* us was to put us into a state of *Trial* and *Probation*, wherein by the *good use* of our Liberty we might by degrees *fit* our selves *for* and at length *arrive to* a *better* and more *raised* Condition, and by an *orderly* Progression from this *rude* and imperfect state, might in the *different* Periods of our Lives *grow up* into *higher* and more *excellent* Capacities, and at length ripen into Perfection. Now in order to our *Trial*

it was requiſite we ſhould be placed among *Difficulties*, without which no *Proof* can be made of our *Virtues*, of our *Patience*, and *Temperance*, and *Chaſtity* and *Equanimity*, *Meekneſs* and *Sobriety*; all which are proper to us as Beings made up of *Angel* and *Brute*; from the *latter* of which Natures all thoſe *brutal* Appetites ariſe in us, in the *good* or *bad* Government whereof conſiſts the Nature of Humane *Virtue* and *Vice*. So that this preſent ſtate of our Life is intended by God for a *Field* of *Combat* between our *Senſe* and our *Reaſon*, our *brutal* and *angelical* Nature, and that the *Victory* of our *Reaſon* might through the *Difficulty* of it be rendered more *glorious* and *rewardable*, God hath furniſhed its *Antagoniſt* with the Weapons of worldly *Temptation* to *aſſault* and *oppoſe* it, to try its *ſtrength* and *Mettle*, and to exerciſe both its *active* and *paſſive* Virtues; intending when it hath *conquered*, to tranſlate us *hence* as a *Reward* of our *Victory* into a *free* and *diſintangled* ſtate, where we ſhall be *vexed* and *inticed* no more with the *Importunities* of *ſenſual* Luſt and Affection, but to all Eternity enjoy the Serenity and Pleaſure of a *pure*, *angelical* Nature. And what is there in all this that is any way *unſuitable*, yea, that is

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not every way *answerable* to the Goodneſs of Providence? 'Tis true, inſtead of *conquering*, we may, if we pleaſe, yield our ſelves *captive* to *Folly* and *Wickedneſs*; but what then? Is Providence to be *blamed* for leaving Mens Hands at Liberty, becauſe ſome have been ſo *deſperate* as to cut their own Throats? 'Tis ſufficient that he hath *propoſed* to us *Reward* enough to *encourage* us to *contend*, and *contributed* to us *Aſſiſtance* enough to *enable* us to *conquer*, and having done all that becomes a *wiſe* and *good* Governour to prevent our *Sin* and *Ruine*, who is to be blamed for it but *our ſelves*? God leaves us at *Liberty* indeed among *Temptations* to *Evil*; and this the very *State* and *Compoſition* of our Natures requires; but all he *deſigns* by it, is to *exerciſe* our *Virtues*, and thereby to *improve* and *train* us up to a ſtate of *higher* Perfection, and to *furniſh* us with glorious Opportunities of *fighting for* and *winning* Crowns and Rewards; and this is ſo far from any way *reflecting* on the *Goodneſs* of his Providence, that it is an *illuſtrious Inſtance* of it; and yet 'tis only *thus far* that he is concerned in the Being of ſin in the World; all *the reſt* is owing to our own *mad* and *deſperate* abuſe of our natural Liberty, to our *wilful* Oppoſition to his *gracious*

Intentions, and *obſtinate* Reſiſtance to his *powerful* Arts and Methods of *preventing* our Sin and Ruine. What then can be more *unreaſonable* than for us to *object* againſt the *Goodneſs* of Gods Providence that which is *purely* the Effect of our own *Madneſs* and *Folly*?

AND if the Evil of *Sin* be no way *inconſiſtent* with the Goodneſs of Providence, much leſs is the Evil of *Miſery*, ſince the *Generality* of thoſe Evils which we *ſuffer* in this World are either the *natural* Effects, or the *juſt* Puniſhments, or the *neceſſary* Antidotes and Preventives of our ſin. And therefore when you come into a great School of *wild* and *unruly* Boys, you may as well argue that there is no *Maſter* of it, becauſe there are *Rods* and *Ferulaes* in it, as that there is no *Providence* over this *ſinful* World, becauſe there are *Miſeries* and *Afflictions* in it; for upon the Being of *Sin* in the World, the Being of *Miſery* is ſo far from being an Argument *againſt* Providence, that 'tis rather a Demonſtration *of* it; becauſe a *ſinful* World can no more be *governed* without *Miſery*, than an *unruly* School without *Correction*.

IV. ANOTHER Objection that is made againſt Providence is that *unequal* diviſion of *Goods* and *Evils* that is made in

in this World. If there were a *just* Providence that *over-ruled* the World, one would think it should make a more *visible* Distinction between *good* and *bad* Men in the *Distribution* of its *Rewards* and *Punishments*; whereas in the *ordinary* Course of things we see *all things happen alike to all*, and *many times* it fares *worst* with the *best*, and *best* with the *worst* of Men. Now because this is the *greatest* and most *universal* Objection that was *ever* urged against the *Providence* of God, I shall in answer to it endeavour to shew, 1. That it is for the most part *false* and *groundless*, 2. That *so far* as it is *true*, it is *no* Argument *at all* against a *Providence*.

First, I say this Objection, that there is no *Difference* made among Men as to the *Goods* and *Evils* of *this* World, is in a great Measure *false* and *groundless*. For I make no doubt but in the *ordinary* Course of things *good* Men are more *prosperous* even in *this* World than *bad*; as for times of *Persecution*, they are a just *Exception* from the *general* rule of Providence; because therein God to serve his *own* Glory, and the *great* Ends of Religion, exchangeth with good Men *spiritual* for *temporal*, and *heavenly* for *earthly* Enjoyments, which is such an *Exchange* as no man will account a

Robbery that underſtands the juſt *value* of thoſe *different* Commodities.

'TIS true, it hath been an *uſual* Complaint in all *Times* and *Ages*, that it fares *beſt* with the *worſt*, and *worſt* with the *beſt*; and through the *commonneſs* of it, it is now grown into a *Maxim*. But it is to be conſidered that Men always *pity* the *miſerable* and *envy* the *proſperous*, and that theſe Paſſions do naturally *bribe* their Judgments to think *worſe* of the one, and *better* of the other than *either* deſerve; for thoſe whom we *pity* we are inclined to *love*, and thoſe whom we *love* we are inclined to *think well* of; as on the contrary, thoſe whom we *envy* we are inclined to *hate*, and thoſe whom we *hate* we are inclined to *think ill* of; and then becauſe God doth not *reward* and *puniſh* Men according to the Sentence that our *blind* Pity or *Envy* paſſes on them, we are ready to *quarrel* with his Providence. And beſides, there are a world of *cloſe Hypocrites*, that under a mighty *ſhew* and *Oſtentation* of Piety do *ſecretly* indulge themſelves in ſundry *waſtful* and *ruinous* Vices, which many times reduce them to *Poverty* and *Miſery*, and *theſe* we commonly *rank* among the *good* it *fares ill* with; as on the contrary there are abundance of *good* Men, that in the Courſe abun-

of a *reserved*, *modest* and *unaffected* Piety, which makes but very little *shew* in the Eye of the World, are *blest* and *prospered*, and *these* we *as commonly* rank among the *bad* that *fare well*. Since therefore we are such *incompetent* Judges of *good* and *bad* Men, we should be very *careful* how we *object* against the *Providence* of God such *Maxims* as are only founded on our own *fallacious* Observations. But could we *strip* our selves of *Pity* and *Envy*, and *penetrate* into the *insides* of Men, I doubt not but we should soon be satisfied that *good* Men have *much* the Advantage of *bad*, even as to the Happiness and Prosperity of *this* World; for though perhaps there are many more *bad* Men *prospered* than *good*, because there are far *more* bad than good Men in the World, yet in *Proportion* to their *Numbers* I doubt the *prosperous good* would far *exceed* the *prosperous bad*, though there should be but *thirty* of the one to *forty* of the other; and supposing that in Proportion there were more *bad* Men than *good* advanced to *worldly Greatness*, (which yet is very *doubtful*, considering how *prone* we are to judge *ill* of *great Men*, and to reckon *more* of them into the Number of the *bad* than we *ought*, through *Envy* and *Misunderstanding* the Reasons of their Acti-

ons) yet it is to be considered that the *true* state of worldly *Happiness* and *Prosperity* consists not in a *great* but in a *moderate* Fortune, and that the good things of this World are no where so *freely* and *entirely* enjoyed, as in the *middle Region* between *Poverty* and *Riches*; for as Poverty is attended with *Famine* and *Cold* and *Anguish*, so Greatness is attended with *Hurry* and *Tumult*, *impaled* with Cares, and *imprisoned* with Pomp and tedious Ceremony; so that the *truly* unfortunate are the *Necessitous* and the *Great*, while the *middle* State without partaking of the evils of *either*, includes all that is *truly desirable* in *both* Extremes; all that Poverty *wants*, and all that Greatness *enjoys*; and in *this* happy state I dare boldly affirm there are proportionably *far more* good Men than bad; For it is a very *rare* thing for a *good* Man that is *honest* and *industrious*, and *depends* upon God for a Blessing, to be reduced to *extreme Necessity*; so *very rare*, that *David* in all his life time could not produce one Instance of it, *Psal.* 37. 25. for *miserable* Poverty is usually the Consequence either of *Idleness*, or *Luxury*, or *Faction*, or *Knavery*; all which are *inconsistent* with true Goodness; and a good Man in any Condition on this side *pinching* Necessity, is *ordi-*

ordinarily even in *this* Life far more happy than the moſt *gay* and *proſperous* Sinner, whoſe *outward* Glory and Greatneſs is uſually nothing but the *gaudy* Cover of a Tragical *Inſide*, of a Mind that is *tortured* with *Pride* and *Envy*, with *boundleſs* Hopes, *inſatiable* Deſires, and *horrible* Reflections, that *daſh* and *embitter* all his Enjoyments, while the good Man under his *mean* and *ſimple* Outſide, carries a *great* and *happy* Soul, a *contented* Mind, a *chearful* Heart, and a *calm* Conſcience, which mightily *ſweeten* all his Enjoyments, and make his *homely* Morſel *outreliſh* the moſt *ſtudied* Luxuries. Let us therefore but judg *impartially* of Men, and but *truly* ſtate what is the *moſt* happy Condition of *humane* Life, and *proportion* the number of the *good* to the *bad*, and *ballance* the *Inſides* of the one with the *Outſides* of the other, and I doubt not but we ſhall be eaſily convinced that even in *this* Life the good *ordinarily* fare much *better* than the bad; for in *true* Computation *Neceſſity* and *Greatneſs* are the only *unfortunate* States of humane Life, and in *theſe* there are far more *bad* Men than *good*; but *between* theſe two *all* Conditions are in a manner *indifferent* as to the Happineſs of Men; and in *this* happy *Mean* there

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are far more *good* Men than *bad*; and then the Minds of *good* Men having infinitely the *advantage* of the Minds of *bad*, as to the rendering their outward Condition *happy*, it is impoſſible but that *ordinarily* and *generally* they muſt be the more *happy* and *proſperous*.

Secondly, So far as this Maxim, that *all things happen alike to all*, is *true*, it is *no* Argument at *all* againſt a Providence; and that upon theſe following Accounts. 1. Becauſe many of the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World happen to us not as *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, but in the *neceſſary* Courſe of *ſecondary* Cauſes. 2. Becauſe the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World are in themſelves ſo *mean* and *inconſiderable* that it would be *beneath* the Wiſdom of Providence to be very *exact* and *curious* in the Diſtribution of 'em. 3. Becauſe this Life is properly the ſtate of our *Trial* and *Probation*, and not of our *Reward* and *Puniſhment*. 4. Becauſe the *Goods* and *Evils* that befall us here are not ſo truly to be eſtimated by *themſelves* as by their *Effects* and *Conſequents*. 5. This *promiſcuous* Diſtribution of things, ſo far as it is, is very requiſite to aſſure us of a *Judgment* to come. 6. Becauſe the *exact* Adjuſtment of things is reſerved for a *future Judgment*.

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I. THE *happning of all things alike to all* is no Argument *against* Providence; becauſe many of the Goods and Evils of this World happen to us not as *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, but in the *neceſſary* Courſe of *ſecond Cauſes*. For in this Life good and bad Men are ſo *mingled* together, that in Caſes of *common* Calamity what happens to the *one* muſt happen to the *other* without a *miraculous* interpoſal of Providence. Thus while God leaves *ſecond Cauſes* to their *natural* Courſe, how is it poſſible that *War*, or *Plague*, or *Famine* ſhould diſtinguiſh between the good and bad that are *incorporated* together in the ſame *Societies*; and ſo long as *free* Agents are left to act *freely*, wicked *Parents* will frequently *ſpoil* their *Conſtitutions* by the repeated Exceſſes of their *Riot* and *Wantonneſs*; and while they do ſo, their Diſeaſes, without a *Miracle*, will deſcend upon their *righteous* as well as *unrighteous* Poſterity; and wicked *Neighbours*, whilſt it lies in their *way*, or ſerves their *Intereſt*, will *wrong* and *oppreſs* the juſt and unjuſt without any *diſtinction*. But you will ſay, why then doth not Providence *interpoſe* between ſecond Cauſes and good Men, and *miraculouſly* protect them from their miſchievous Effects? To which in ſhort I anſwer,

anſwer, that in ſome extraordinary caſes God *hath* interpoſed, of which there are innumerable Inſtances both in *ſacred* and *profane* Hiſtory; but to expect that he ſhould *ordinarily* and *conſtantly* do this, is very *unreaſonable*, becauſe it cannot be done without giving a perpetual *Diſturbance* to the *Courſe* of Nature, which being in the whole moſt *orderly* and *regular*, full of admirable *Beauty* and *Contrivance*, ought not to be *diſturbed* and *inverted* upon ordinary Occaſions. For if the eſtabliſhed Courſe of things be *wiſe* and *regular* in the *whole*, why ſhould we expect that God ſhould be perpetually *tampering* with it, and *interrupting* and *varying* it by his immediate Interpoſals, as if he were *diſſatisfied* with his own *Contrivance*, and upon every *Reviſal* of this great Volume of the World, did ſtill diſcover new *Erratas* in it to be *corrected* and *amended*. The Evils therefore which *good* Men ſuffer are not ordinarily ſo *momentous* as to oblige a *wiſe* and *good* God to *interrupt* the Couſe of Nature to *prevent* them; and it is much better that *ſome* violences ſhould be offered to good Men, than that a *conſtant* violence ſhould be offered to the *Nature of things*; and ſince God can carry on his good Deſigns to good Men in a *ſtill* and

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silent Path, and cause all their *adverse* Accidents to *unwind* of themselves, and at last to *clear up* into a blessed Close, is it not much better he should do it this way, than by offering *perpetual* Violence and Disturbance to Nature?

II. THE *happening of all things alike to all* is no Argument *against* a Providence, because the Goods and Evils of this World are so *mean* and *inconsiderable*, that it would be *beneath* the Wisdom of Providence to be very *exact* and *curious* in the distribution of them. It is no part of wisdom to be *nice* and *curious* about *Trifles*. 'Twas ridiculous *enough* in *Caligula* to imploy a *mighty* Army only to gather a great heap of *Cockle shels*; but when he had gathered them, it would have been much *more* ridiculous to have taken a great deal of care to divide them amongst his Soldiers in *exact* Proportions to each ones *Merit* and *Desert*. Now though *we* look upon the Goods and Evils of this World as things of *vast* and *mighty* Moment, yet *God* who sees them with far better Eyes than we, knows very well that they are but *Trifles* in comparison with those *endless* Goods or Evils we must *enjoy* or *suffer* in another World, and that it is a very *inconsiderable* thing whether we fare *well*

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or *ill* this moment, who immediately after muſt fare well or ill *for ever*; and therefore he looks on it, as he *juſtly* may, as a thing *beneath* his infinite Wiſdom to be very *exact* and *curious* in dividing to us theſe *momentary* Trifles in *juſt* Proportions to our particular Deſerts; and did we not ſtrangely *magnifie* them, by looking on them through the *falſe* Opticks of our own *fantaſtick* Hopes and Fears, we ſhould be ſo far from *objecting* againſt Gods *Providence* theſe *unequal* Diſtributions of them, that were they more *exact* and *equal* we ſhould rather object againſt his *Wiſdom*, as thinking it a very *mean* Employment for a Deity to be very *nice* and *curious* in proportioning ſuch *momentary* Enjoyments and Sufferings to the Merit or Demerit of *immortal* Creatures. So that conſidering of what little moment the preſent *Goods* and *Evils* are which good Men *ſuffer* and bad Men *enjoy*, they ought rather to be lookt on as an Argument of Gods *Wiſdom* than as an Objection againſt his *Providence*; for he underſtands the *juſt* value of things, and knows that the *beſt* of theſe worldly Goods are *bad* enough to be thrown away upon the *worſt* of Men, and ſo expreſſes his juſt *ſcorn* of theſe *admired* Vanities, by ſcattering them abroad with

with a *careleſs* Hand; for why ſhould *he* partake of the Errours of *vulgar* Opinion, and expreſs himſelf ſo very *regardful* of theſe Trifles as to put them in gold Scales and weigh them out to Mankind by Grains and Scruples.

III. THAT *all things here do happen alike to all* is no Argument againſt Providence, becauſe this Life is properly the ſtate of our *Trial* and *Probation*, and not of our *Reward* and *Puniſhment*. The divine Providence hath placed us here as *Candidates* and *Probationers* for thoſe everlaſting Preferments it deſigns us hereafter, that ſo by *training* and *exerciſing* us in all thoſe excellent Virtues that are proper to our Natures, it may improve us from *one* degree of Perfection to *another*, 'till at laſt it hath *accompliſhed* us for the heavenly State; in order to which Deſign it is neceſſary that there ſhould be an *unequal* Diſtribution of things, whereby good Men may ſometimes *ſuffer* and bad Men *proſper*; otherwiſe there would be no *occaſion* for any of our *paſſive* Virtues, nor any *tryal* of our *active*. For Affliction is the Theatre of *Patience* and *Fortitude*, and *Reſignation* to God, and without it there would be no room in the Lives of good Men for the Exerciſe of theſe virtues, which

for

for want of Objects to act on, would *ruſt* and wax *languid*. Again, Difficulty is the Touchſtone of our *Love* and *Faith* and *Ingenuity*; but ſhould Providence be always *crowning* the Righteous, and *dragging* Offenders to Execution, ſuch a Procedure would *determin* our Liberty, and leave us no room for the Exerciſe of our *Faith* and *Ingenuity*; for then the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* of Providence would be ſo *ſenſibly* and *continually* preſent with us, and ſo *urgently* preſs upon our Hopes and Fears, that it would be impoſſible for us *not* to *believe* in God, and next to impoſſible not to *obey* him; and being thus *forced* to believe and obey, what *Excellency* would there be in our Piety and Virtue? What *Charity* is it for a *Miſer* to lend his Money upon Aſſurance of twenty *per cent?* Or what *Loyalty* for a *Traitor* to diſcover his *Conſpirators* within ſight of a Wrack? And juſt as little Virtue would there be in any of our good Works, were there an *exact* Equality in the Diſtributions of Prodence. For then we ſhould never do a *good* Work but upon the *certain* Proſpect of an *immediate* Reward, nor *repent* of a *bad* one but upon the *irreſiſtible* Dread of ſome *immediate* Puniſhment. But in this *inequality* of things wherein the good often

ten *ſuffer* and the wicked *proſper*, we are left in a *free* and *unconſtrain'd* Condition, and whether we are *virtuous* or *vitious*, *devout* or *profane*, it is out of *Choice* and not of *Neceſſity*. So that now to *believe* and *obey* the ſacred Dictates of Religion is *generous* and *ingenuous*, and our Faith and Obedience is our *virtue* and *Excellency*, becauſe we believe and obey *without* Force and *againſt* Temptations and Difficulties.

AND as this *unequal* State of things is of abſolute Neceſſity to *try* and *exerciſe* our Virtues, ſo it is alſo very *aſſiſtant* thereunto. For that Providence doth *generally* and not *univerſally* bleſs and proſper good Men, is a great ſupport to a *wiſe* and *rational* Belief. For as a late excellent Author hath well obſerved, if things were *conſtantly* managed one way without any *variation*, we might be apt to conclude that the World was under the *rigid* Laws of a *fatal* Neceſſity; if on the other ſide there were no *Rule* obſerved, no Footſteps of *Method* in the Diſpenſations of Providence, we might be tempted to believe that *Chance* rules the World; but when we obſerve that in the management of things there is an *Intermixture* of theſe two, *viz.* that there is a *general Rule*, and that there

are *particular* Exceptions from it, we have juſt reaſon to conclude that all is under a *free* Almighty Agent, that rules the World according to the Determinations of his own Will. As this way of Providence, *viz.* to *interweave* into good Mens Fortunes *Adverſity* with *Proſperity*, is in this reſpect very advantageous to their *Faith*, ſo is it alſo to the *whole State* of their Virtue; for as on the one hand a continued train of *proſperous* Events would be apt to *bloat* and *elevate* their Minds, ſo on the other a continued ſeries of *Adverſity* would be apt to *ſink* and *depreſs* their Spirits, whilſt this middle way of *Interchange* in their Condition *balances* them on both ſides, and keeps them in an *even*, *ſteddy* and *well-poized* Temper. Since therefore this Life is the ſtate of our *Trial*, it is evident that an *exact* Equality of things would be a much ſtronger Objection againſt the *Wiſdom* of Providence, than all theſe *preſent* Inequalities are againſt the *Juſtice* of it. For *Hardſhips* and *Difficulties* are neceſſary to a ſtate of *Trial*, and were good Men always *bleſt* and bad Men always *puniſhed*, this Life inſtead of being a *Probation* to either would be the Heaven of the *one* and the Hell of the *other*; and ſince ſome *Afflictions* are neceſſary to

try

try good Men, and ſome *Proſperities* to try bad, it would be a ſtrange *overſight* of Providence, when it deſigns the Trial of *both*, to fix them in ſuch a Condition, wherein no through Experment can be made of *either*. So that for us to object againſt Providence for making ſuch *unequal* Diſtributions in a ſtate wherein it deſigns our *Trial*, is in effect to object againſt *Wiſdom* for acting moſt *ſutably* to its *own* Deſigns.

IV. THAT *all things here do happen alike to all* is no Argument againſt Providence, becauſe the Goods and Evils that befal us *here*, are not ſo truly to be eſtimated by *themſelves* as by their *Effects* and *Conſequents*. For the divine Providence, which runs through all things, hath *diſpoſed* and *connected* them into ſuch a Series and Order, that there is no ſingle *Event* or *Accident* but what is purely miraculous, but depends upon the *whole* Syſtem, and hath innumerable *Cauſes* antecedent to it, and *innumerable* Conſequents attending it; and what theſe Conſequents will be, whether *good* or *bad*, is beyond our Skill to *prognoſticate*; ſo that though the Event be never ſo good or bad *ſingly* and *apart* by it ſelf, yet in *Conjunction* with all thoſe Conſequents that will moſt *certainly* at-

tend it, the *beſt* Event for all we know may prove moſt *miſchievous*, and the *worſt* moſt *beneficial* to us. So that for us *boldly* to pronounce concerning the Good or Evil of Events, before we ſee the *Train* of *Conſequents* that follow them, is very *raſh* and *inconſiderate*. As for inſtance, you ſee a good Man *oppreſſed* with Sorrows and Afflictions, and a bad Man *crowned* with Pleaſures and Proſperities; and conſidering theſe things *apart* by themſelves, you conclude that the one fares very *ill* and the other very *well*; but did you at the ſame time ſee the Conſequents of the *ones* Adverſity and the *others* Proſperity, it is probable you would conclude the quite contrary, *viz.* that the good Mans *Adverſity* was a *Bleſſing*, and the bad Mans *Proſperity* a *Curſe*. For I dare boldly affirm that *good* Men *generally* reap more ſubſtantial *Benefit* from their *Afflictions* than *bad* Men do from their *Proſperities*; the one ſmarts indeed at *preſent*; but what follows? perhaps his *Mind* is cured by it of ſome *Diſeaſe* that is ten times worſe to him than his *outward* Affliction; of *Avarice* or *Impatience*, of *Envy* or *Diſcontent*, of *Pride* or *vanity of Spirit*; his Riches are *leſſened*, but his Virtues are *improved* by it; his Body is *impaired* but his Mind is grown

grown *ſound* and *haile* by it, and what he hath loſt in *Health* or *Wealth*, or *Pleaſure* or *Honour*, he hath gained with vaſt advantage in *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, in *Tranquillity of Mind* and *Self-enjoyment*. And methinks no Man, who believes he hath a *Soul*, ſhould grudg to ſuffer any *tolerable* Affliction for the bettering his *Mind*, his *Will* and his *Conſcience*. On the other hand the bad Man *triumphs* and *rejoyces* at preſent; but what follows? his Proſperity either *ſhrivles* him into Miſerableneſs, or *melts* him into Luxury; the former of which *impoveriſhes*, and the latter *diſeaſes* him; for if the *former* be the Effect of his Proſperity, it *increaſes* his Needs, becauſe before he needed only what he had *not*, but now he needs both what he *hath not* and what he *hath*; his covetous Deſires treating him as the Faulkner doth his Hawk, ſtill *luring* him off from what he hath ſeized to fly at *new* Game, and never permitting him to prey upon his *own* Quarry: and if the *latter* be the Effect of his Proſperity, that is, if it *melts* him into Luxury, it thereby waſts his *Health* to be ſure, and commonly his *Eſtate* too; and ſo whereas it found him *poor* and *well*, it leaves him *poor* and *diſeaſed*, and only took him up from the *Plow*

and ſets him down at the *Hoſpital*. In general, while he is poſſeſſed of it, it only *bloats* and *ſwells* him, makes him *proud* and *inſolent*, *griping* and *oppreſſive*, *pampers* and *inrages* his Luſt, *ſtretches* out his Deſires into an inſatiable Bulimy, *ſticks* his Mind full of *Cares* and his Conſcience of *Guilts*, and by all theſe woful Effects it *inflames* his Reckoning with God, and *treaſures* up Wrath for him againſt the day of Wrath; ſo that comparing the Conſequents of the good Mans *Adverſity* with thoſe of the bad Mans *Proſperity*, it is evident that the former fares *well* even in his *worſt* Condition, and the latter *ill* in his *beſt*. *It's well for me*, ſaith good David, *that I was afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now I have kept thy Commandments*, Pſalm 119. 67. But on the contrary, *when the Wicked ſpring as the Graſs*, ſaith the ſame Author, *and when all the workers of Iniquity do flouriſh, it is that they ſhall be deſtroyed for ever*, Pſalm 92. 7. If then in the Conſequents of things good Men are *bleſſed* in their Afflictions, and bad Men *plagued* in their Proſperities, as it is apparent they *generally* are, theſe *unequal* Diſtributions are ſo far from being an Argument *againſt* Providence, that they are a glorious Inſtance *of* it.

it. For wherein could the divine Providence better expreſs its *Juſtice* and *Wiſdom* together, than by *beneſiting* the good and *puniſhing* the bad by ſuch *croſs* and *improbable* Methods?

V. THAT *all things here do happen alike to all*, is no Argument againſt Providence, becauſe it is very *requiſite* it ſhould *often* do ſo, to aſſure us of a *Judgment* to come. For were the Affairs of this World managed with that *exact* Equality as that the good did never *ſuffer* nor the bad eſcape *unpuniſhed*, we ſhould be deprived of one of the *beſt* moral Arguments of a *future Judgment*. For as on the one hand ſhould Providence *never* reward the good nor puniſh the bad in *this* Life, but confound them together without *any* Diſtinction, it might tempt us to deſpair of any *juſt Retributions* from it in the *Life to come*; ſo on the other hand were the Goods and Evils of this Life *weighed out* to Men in *exact* Proportions to their *Merit* and *Demerit* without any *Inequality*, we might be tempted to think that there is no *need of*, and conſequently no *ground* to expect any *Judgment to come*. For what occaſion would there be for any *future* Judgment if all things were *already* exactly *balanced* and *adjuſted*; and therefore as to *confirm*

us in the Belief of the *Juſtice* of Providence, it was requiſite the ſame *plain* Inſtances ſhould be given of its Diſtinguiſhing the good from the bad by preſent *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*; ſo to *confirm* us in the Expectation of a *Judgment to come*, it was no leſs requiſite that there ſhould be ſome Inequality in the preſent *Management* and *Diſtribution* of things, and that the Goods and Evils of *this* World ſhould not be adminiſtred with that exact Regularity as to prevent the *neceſſity* of a *day of Judgment*; but that there ſhould be *undecided* Caſes enough remaining for a *future* Tribunal to *adjuſt* and *determine*. So that as in the *preſent* management of things there is *Equality* enough to induce us to believe a *juſt* Providence; ſo there is alſo *Inequality* enough to induce us to *expect* a *future Judgment*; God having *wiſely* provided in his *preſent* Adminiſtration of things, to give us Inſtances enough of his *juſt* Procedure towards the good and bad, and yet to leave us Inſtances enough of *unrewarded* Virtue and *proſperous* Wickedneſs, to aſſure us that he intends an *after Reckoning*. For how can we reflect upon theſe repeated Examples of juſt *Reward* and *Puniſhment*, which in every Age almoſt God ſets before us, and not believe that

that he *governs* the World? And how can we reflect upon thoſe *manifold* Evils which ſome good Men *ſuffer*, and Goods which ſome bad Men *enjoy*, without believing that he hath appointed a Day wherein he will *adjuſt* theſe *Inequalities* and *vindicate* the Cauſe of *oppreſſed* Virtue, and *cruſh* triumphant Wickedneſs into *everlaſting Confuſion*?

VI. And laſtly, *That all things here do happen alike to all*, is no Argument againſt Providence, becauſe the *exact* Adjuſtment of things is reſerved for a *future Judgment*. I confeſs were God to make no *other* Diſtribution to the juſt and unjuſt, but what is made in *this* Life, the *Inequality* of it would be a *ſtrong* Objection againſt his Providence; but then conſidering that all this *cloudy* Scene of things will ſhortly *cloſe up* in a *righteous* Judgment, wherein for the Evils which the *good* have *ſuffered* they ſhall be awarded an *eternal Happineſs*, and for the Goods which the *bad* have *enjoyed* they ſhall be doomed to *everlaſting Wretchedneſs*, this is ſufficient to vindicate the Juſtice of Providence were theſe *preſent* Inequalities a *thouſand* times greater than they are. For ſuppoſe that after a ſhort *Melancholy* Dream *good* Men were to live *happily*, and after as ſhort a *pleaſant* one

one *bad* Men were to live *wretchedly* but for a *thouſand* years in this World; we might as well object againſt Providence this *unequal* Diſtribution of the *melancholy* Dream to the *good*, and the *pleaſant* one to the *bad*, notwithſtanding the ſucceeding thouſand years of their *Happineſs* and *Miſery*, as we do the *ſufferings* of the Righteous and *Proſperities* of the Wicked, which bear far *leſs* Proportion to that Eternity of Happineſs and Miſery that is to *ſucceed* them, than the *Sorrow* or *Pleaſure* of a Moments Dream doth to a thouſand years *real* Calamity or Bleſſedneſs.

FOR the Providence of God from the *firſt* to the *laſt* is all but *one* continued Plot, like that of a *well-contrived* Comedy, which at firſt is very *obſcure* and *intricate*; ſo that by what is *paſt* or *preſent* there is no gueſſing at the Concluſion; for all through the *intermediate* Acts *Virtue* and *Honour* fight their way through *Difficulties* and *Diſappointments*, and ſometimes the *Hero* acts a *ſad*, and ſometimes the *Villain* a *proſperous* Part, at which the *unskilful* Spectator *grieves*, and is ready to *damn* the Poet for diſtributing ſuch unequal Fates; but then in the *fifth* and *laſt* Act all the croſs Accidents *clear up*, and

iſſue

iſſue in a *fair* Concluſion; and in the cloſe of all, the Hero is *crowned*, and the Villain *hiſſed off* the Stage. Let us therefore have but the patience to ſtay 'till Providence hath *finiſhed* its *whole* Plot, and cloſed up all its *mighty* Scenes in the *general* Judgment of the World, and then we ſhall ſee all theſe *Inequalities* ſet *right*, and the Fates of good and bad Men *determined* by a moſt *juſt* Award. But for us to *quarrel* at Providence *now*, who are yet got no farther, it may be, than to the *middle* of the great *Drama*, and to *find fault* with its Procedure for *croſſing* the good and *proſpering* the bad, is rudely to *overturn* the Stage before the *Entrance* into the *fifth* Act, and to *hiſs* off the *Almighty* Poet for not *compleating* his Deſign before he is arrived to the *Concluſion*. And thus I have endeavoured to anſwer more *at large* this Objection againſt Providence, becauſe it hath been *more* inſiſted on than any *other*, and hath more generally *ſtumbled* Mens Belief of divine Providence.

V. And laſtly, It is farther *objected* that the Being of a *juſt* and *good* Providence, is not to be reconciled with that *wretched* State and Condition to which we behold the *greateſt* part of Mankind *abandoned*.

For

For if there were a good Providence that over-ruled the Affairs of this World, how is it imaginable that ever ſo *great* a part of Mankind as the *Infidel World* includes, ſhould be left ſo utterly *deſtitute* as they are of the *Knowledg of God*, and of the *Means* of attaining their *everlaſting Happineſs*? To which I ſhall briefly anſwer theſe three things:

I. THAT the *Infidel World* is not perhaps left ſo *utterly* deſtitute as we are apt to *imagine*; for they have the *Law of Nature* to *direct* them, by which alone they muſt be *tried*, and *ſtand* or *fall* at the Day of Judgment; which as to the *main ſtrokes* of their Duty, is ſo *plain* and *intelligible*, that no *ſincere* Inquirer can be ignorant of it; and if when they *may* underſtand it they *will* not, or if when they *do* underſtand it, they wilfully *tranſgreſs* and *violate* it, the Divine Providence hath been ſufficiently *good* to them to leave them for ever *inexcuſable*. For ſo far as their Ignorance is *invincible* it is not their *Sin*, nor ſhall they ever be *accountable* for it, or for any ſinful *Omiſſion* or *Commiſſion* thence proceeding, and if they only anſwer for not *underſtanding* their Duty when they *might*, or for not *performing* it ſo far as they *underſtood* it, they can have

no

no reaſon to complain that they are *hardly dealt* with. But then,

II. As *they* have not thoſe vaſt Advantages that *we* have of *becoming* good, and *growing up* into the ſtate of Perfection and Happineſs, ſo proportionably *leſs* Degrees of *Good* will be *accepted* of thoſe that do *well*, and *leſs* Degrees of *Puniſhment* exacted of thoſe that do *ill*; for that Maxim of our Saviour, *Luke* 12. 48. *To whomſoever much is given, of him much ſhall be required*, neceſſarily implies the *contrary*, *viz.* that to whomſoever *leſs* is *given* of him *leſs* ſhall be *required*; and if ſo, it is certain that ſo much as *their* means of being good are leſs than *ours*, ſo much the leſs good God will accept of *them* than of *us*; and as God will accept leſs *good* of the *beſt* Infidels, ſo he will exact leſs *Puniſhment* of the *worſt*; for ſo our Saviour himſelf hath aſſured us, that it will be more tolerable for *Tire* and *Sidon*, and *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* in the laſt Day, than for thoſe who perſiſt in their *Unbelief* and *Diſobedience* in deſpight of the Propoſals of the Goſpel. If then in Proportion to their preſent *Diſadvantages* leſs good will be *accepted* of thoſe who make *any* Improvement, and leſs Puniſhment *exacted* of them who make *none*, neither the *one*

ſort

ſort nor the *other* hath any reaſon to complain; and though their Condition were *worſe* than it is, yet under theſe Circumſtances it would be fairly *conſiſtent* with the *Goodneſs* of the Divine Providence. But then,

III. And laſtly, Though their Condition *were* a great deal worſe than it *is*, yet it would be very unreaſonable for us to *object* it againſt the *Goodneſs* of the divine Providence, unleſs we *better* underſtood than we *do*, how God will diſpoſe of them in the *other* World. Indeed if Mens *Fate* conſiſted in what they *ſuffer* and *enjoy* in this Life, we might better judg of Providence by what is *before us*; but ſince our *main* ſtate is beyond the Grave, whatever befals us *here* is very inconſiderable, compared with what we muſt ſuffer or enjoy *hereafter*; and as for the *preſent* Diſadvantages which the heathen World lies under, they are but very *ſhort* and *momentary*, and if Providence *pleaſes*, it can abundantly *compenſate* them in the *World to come*; and therefore ſince *yet* we know not what it *will* do, as having no Revelation in the Caſe, it becomes us to *ſuſpend* our Judgment 'till the *Event* hath *determined* it.

THIS

THIS we know, that Providence hath *ways* enough, and *time* enough too between *this* and the Day of Judgment, to ſupply theſe *Deſtitute* Souls with all thoſe ſpiritual *Advantages* in the *other Life*, which for Reaſons beſt known to it ſelf it hath *hitherto* withheld from them; it may if it pleaſes extend their *Trial* and *Probation* beyond *this* Life, and diſcover in the *other* Life the Light of the *Goſpel*, to *ſo many* of them at leaſt as have *here* made any tolerable Improvements under the Light of *Nature*, and if they make good uſe of it, *reward* them accordingly. For though *we* Chriſtians have no reaſon to expect any *farther* Trial after *this* Life is expired, becauſe we have paſſed the *utmoſt* Trial already, yet who knows but God may make a farther Trial of *thoſe* in the other Life, upon whom the *great* Experiment of the Goſpel was yet *never* made; and therefore ſince Providence can *yet* be infinitely good to them notwithſtanding their wretched Condition *at preſent*, and ſince for all we know it *will* be ſo, we ought not to object againſt it its *preſent* Diſregard of them, till we ſee the *final* Iſſue of things; for that their *preſent* Condition is ſo *bad* is no ground for us to argue againſt Providence, unleſs we were

ſure

ſure it would *never* be *better*; becauſe for all we know it may *yet* be rendered good enough not only to *juſtifie*, but to *glorifie* the Goodneſs of Gods Providence towards them.

AND now to conclude this *great* Argument. Since we ſee how *neceſſary* the Belief of Providence is to our being *truly religious*, and what *unanſwerable* Evidence there is of the *Truth* and *Reality* of it, what remains but that we heartily endeavour by a *calm*, *fixt*, and *impartial* Conſideration of theſe things, throughly to *inſtruct* our ſelves in the *Nature*, and firmly to *eſtabliſh* our ſelves in the *Belief* of it; For our Religion muſt neceſſarily *ebb* or *flow* according as it is influenced *more* or *leſs* by our *Underſtanding* and *Belief* of the divine Providence, which are the great Principles that *move* and *govern* it. For every Branch of the Divine Providence is an inexhauſtible Fountain of religious *Rhetorick* and *Perſuaſion*, and in this *ſingle* Propoſition, that God *upholds* and *governs* the World, there are a thouſand times *more* Inducements to Piety and Virtue, than in all *other* Topicks in the World. But how *pregnant* ſoever it is with Arguments, and how *powerful* ſoever its Arguments are, 'tis impoſſible it ſhould prevail upon

upon any reaſonable Mind that *underſtands* not the *Force*, and *believes* not the *Truth* of it; for all the *poſſible* Acceſs which *outward* Objects have to our Minds, is through our *Knowledg* and *Belief* of them, without which the moſt *momentous* Propoſals are no more capable of *affecting* us than one of *Tully*'s Orations is of calming the North-wind; but he who firmly *believes* the *Truth*, and *underſtands* the full *Emphaſis* of a Divine Providence, muſt neceſſarily be affected by it, if he be but within the *Reach* and *Power* of Perſuaſion; and unleſs his Will be *impregnably* fortified againſt all the Force of *Argument* and *Reaſon*, he will find himſelf ſo *beſieged* with Motives on every ſide perſuading him to ſubmit to the Obligations of Religion, that it will be almoſt impoſſible for him to *defend* himſelf againſt their *powerful* Importunities. For what Man in his Wits can ſit *unconcerned* under the lively Belief that he is in the hands of a moſt *juſt* and *gracious*, *alwiſe*, and *Almighty* Providence, that is conſcious to his inmoſt *Thoughts* and *Purpoſes*, and beholds all his Actions with infinite *Complacency* or *Abhorrence*; that hath the diſpoſal of his *Life* and his *Soul*, and of all the Goods he can *hope* for, and all the Evils he can *fear*, and will

certainly *reward* him a thouſand-fold if he doth *well*, and if he doth *ill* as certainly purſue him with a dire *Revenge*? This Belief carries with it ſuch conſtraining *Terrors* and *Allurements* as cannot but *affect* all reaſonable Minds, and finally *prevail* with their *Hopes* and *Fears* againſt all contrary Temptations. Wherefore if ever we would *fix* the Obligations of Religion upon our Minds, it concerns us above all things to be throughly *inſtructed* in the *Nature*, and *confirmed* in the *Belief* of the divine Providence.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the neceſſity of believing divine Rewards *and* Puniſhments *in order to our being* truly Religious.

HUMANE Nature is framed to move upon the Hinges of *Hope* and *Fear*, and to be *elicited* and *drawn forth* in Action either by the Propoſal of ſome *attainable* Good or Proſpect of ſome *avoidable* Evil, the *former* of which begets Hope in us, and *that* Purſuit; the *latter* Fear, and that *Flight* and *Avoidance*; and accordingly we find all Laws addreſs to the *Hopes* and *Fears* of Men with Propoſals of *Reward* and *Puniſhment*, as to the *Maſter-Springs* and *Principles* of their Action, by which they are moved to *do* or *forbear* according as they are required and enjoyned. And indeed to give *Laws* to Men without inforcing them with *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, would be to leave it *indifferent* whether they *obeyed* them or *no*, which is *inconſiſtent* with the Nature of Laws; for Laws *neceſſarily* imply an

Obligation to Obedience; but what Obligation could we have to obey them, did they leave it *indifferent* as to any Good or Evil accrewing from it, whether we *obeyed* them or *no*; for if it will be as well for us *one* way as *t'other*, what matter is it which way we determine our ſelves? And this holds good in nothing more than in the Matter of our Obedience to the Laws of *Religion*, to which our corrupt Nature is above all things *backward* and *averſe*; all that ſpiritual Exerciſe which thoſe Laws require being quite againſt the Grain of our *Earthy* and *ſenſual* Inclinations; ſo that were we not *drawn* to it by the *Hope* of Good, and *driven* by the *Fear* of Evil, to be ſure our own *bad* natures would keep us at an *eternal* Diſtance from it; but unleſs we believe God to be a *Rewarder* of thoſe that *obey*, and a *Puniſher* of thoſe that *deſpiſe* him, we have no ground to hope for any *Good*, or to dread any *Evil* at his hands.

For unleſs we believe that he will *Crown* thoſe that ſerve him with ſome Mark of his *Favour*, how can we think he is *pleaſed* with them; there being no *other* way for him to expreſs his being Pleaſed, but by Crowning 'em with ſome *ſignal* Reward; and if he be *not* Pleaſed with

thoſe that *ſerve* him, to be ſure he is not *Diſpleaſed* with thoſe that *Neglect* him; and if he be not *Diſpleaſed* with 'em, what Reaſon have we to apprehend that he will *Puniſh* 'em? Thus the *unbelief* of Gods being a *Rewarder* of thoſe that *obey* him draws after it an *unbelief* of his being a *Puniſher* of thoſe that *Deſpiſe* him, and ſo on the contrary. For unleſs we believe him to be ſo much *concerned* for his Service as to *puniſh* thoſe that *neglect* it, we have no reaſon to think he is ſo much concerned for it as to *reward* thoſe that *embrace* it. So that the *belief* and *unbelief* of Gods being a *Rewarder* and a *Puniſher* do by neceſſary conſequence *mutually* imply each other; and unleſs we believe *Both* there is no reaſon we ſhould believe *Either*. And when our nature is ſo *averſe*, as it is, to his Service, what ſhould *induce* us to *ſerve* him when we expect no *Good* from him, or *hinder* us from *ſlighting* him when we fear no *Evil*? And what is there can *bring us home* to God when we are *carried away* from him with an *impetuous* Tide of *corrupt* Inclinations, and have neither *Hope* nor *Fear* to Bound or Reſtrain it? So that conſidering the *Averſation* of our Nature to Gods ſervice, it is morally impoſſible

we ſhould ever be heartily *reconciled* to it without being Drawn with the *Hope* of Reward, and Driven with the *Fear* of Puniſhment.

In the Proſecution of this Argument I ſhall indeavour to ſhew,

Firſt, How *far* it's neceſſary that our *Belief* of divine *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* ſhould *extend*.

Secondly, What *Evidence* there is to induce us to *believe* them.

Thirdly, By what *Means* this is to be *Begotten* and *Confirmed*.

SECT. I.

How far *it is neceſſary that our* belief *of divine* Rewards *and* Puniſhments *ſhould* extend.

FOR to induce us to ſubmit to the Obligations of Religion, it is by no means *ſufficient* that we believe in the *general* that God will *Reward* us if we do well, and *Puniſh* us if we do wickedly. For this we may *firmly* believe, and yet at the ſame time prefer the *Pleaſures* of ſin as much

much *greater* Goods than the *Rewards* of Vertue, and Dread the *Difficulties* of Vertue as much *greater* Evils than the *Puniſhments* of ſin; wherefore to Render our Belief of divine Rewards and Puniſhments an *Effectual* Principle of Religion theſe four things are neceſſary.

Firſt, That we ſhould believe that God is ſo *far* a Rewarder of thoſe that ſerve him, and ſo *far* a Puniſher of thoſe that neglect him, as to make a *Plain* and *ſenſible* Diſtinction between them.

Secondly, Conſidering how *Promiſcuouſly* the Goods and Evils of this World are *diſtributed* among Good and Bad men, it's neceſſary we ſhould believe, That there is a *Future* ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments.

Thirdly, It is neceſſary we ſhould believe thoſe *Future* Rewards and Puniſhments to be ſuch as do *Infinitely* Tranſcend any Good we can *Reap* by our ſins, and any Evil we can *Incur* by doing our Duty.

Fourthly, It is neceſſary we ſhould believe that there is no *other* way for us to *Avoid* thoſe Puniſhments but by *forſaking* our ſins, or to *Acquire* thoſe Rewards but by *ſubmitting* to our Duty.

I. IT is neceſſary we ſhould believe that God is ſo *far* a Rewarder of thoſe that ſerve, and ſo *far* a Puniſher of thoſe that Neglect him, as to make a *plain* and *ſenſible* diſtinction between them. For unleſs we believe that God makes *ſome* Diſtinction between thoſe *ſerve* and thoſe that *neglect* him, we ſhall *Confound* Good and Evil in our own Apprehenſions, and look upon all humane actions as *Indifferent*, and thereby diſſolve all the *Ties* and *Obligations* of Religion. For things are in *Themſelves*, as they are in the *Judgment* and *Eſteem* of God, who cannot be *miſtaken* in Eſtimating their Natures; and therefore unleſs there be ſome Diſtinction between *Men* and *Men*, and *Actions* and *Actions* in the Eſteem of *God*, they muſt be all *Alike* and *Indifferent* in their *Own* natures. And if all Actions are Indifferent in *themſelves*, we are *free* from all the Ties and Obligations of Religion, and 'tis left *Indifferent* to us whether we will *Worſhip* God or *Blaſpheme* him. So that unleſs we believe that *God* makes ſome *Diſtinction* between the *Good* and *bad*, Religion can have no force *at all* upon our minds.

But now there is no other way for God

to

to *Diſtinguiſh* between *Men* and *Men*, but by *Rewarding* and *Puniſhing* them; becauſe if he make any Diſtinction in his *Affections* between us, we may be ſure his *Love* will incline him to *Reward*, and his *Hatred* to *Puniſh* us; and ſince 'tis as *Eaſie* to him to *follow* his Inclination as *not*, ſince he can Reward where he Loves, and Puniſh where he Hates without any *Diſturbance* to his own *Happineſs*, what ſhould *hinder* him from doing it, ſuppoſing that he really *loves* or *hates*, or makes *any* Diſtinction in his Affections between thoſe that *ſerve* and thoſe that *neglect* him? So that unleſs he Reward the *one* and Puniſh the *other*, he can make no *Viſible* Diſtinction in his Affections between them. If he be *Contrarily* affected to Good and Bad men, his *Affections* will infallibly appear in his *Actions*; but if he uſe them *Alike*, it is plain they are *Alike* to him. So that unleſs we believe that God *diſtinguiſhes* between Good and Bad men by Rewarding and Puniſhing them, we muſt look upon Both as *Indifferent* to him, and believe that he concerns himſelf neither with the *one* nor the *other*; and if we think it is Indifferent to *God* whether we are *Good* or *Bad*, to be ſure it will not be Indifferent to *us*, whoſe natures are ſo

Biaſſed

Biaſſed with *Bad* Inclinations, which having neither Hope nor Fear to *Reſtrain* them, will Run towards *Bad* Objects without *Rub* or *Interruption*. And what likelihood is there that *we* who are ſo *Prone* and *Inclinable* to evil, ſhould *concern* our ſelves in the ſervice of God, whilſt we look upon it as a thing *Indifferent* to him whether we *ſerve* him or *no*?

Wherefore to the *ſubduing* our minds to the Obligations of Religion, it is neceſſary we ſhould believe that God is ſo *far* a Rewarder of Good, and Puniſher of Bad Men, as to make a *ſenſible* Diſtinction between them, and demonſtrate that he is *differently* affected towards them. For to what end ſhould we ſerve a God that takes *no notice* of us, that *regards* not what we do, but ſits above in the Heavens as an *unconcerned* ſpectator of our Actions; why ſhould we *croſs* our own inclinations, and *forſake* our beloved luſts, for his ſake, when it is altogether *Indifferent* to him *what* we do, or *whither* we go, or what *becomes* of us?

II. Conſidering how *Promiſcuouſly* the Goods and Evils of this life are *diſtributed* among Good and Bad Men, it is neceſſary that we ſhould believe there is a *Future* ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments. For though

though *ſometimes* in *this* life God rewards Good men, and puniſhes Bad with ſuch *ſignal* and *Remarkable* Goods and Evils as are ſufficient Indications of the vaſt Diſtinction he makes between them, yet this is *Extraordinary* and beſides the *Conſtant* and *Regular* Courſe of his Providence, which for *wiſe* and *excellent* ends and purpoſes doth ordinarily *ſcatter* Good and Evil among men with an *open* and *undiſtinguiſhing* hand; inſomuch that as the Wiſe man obſerves, *Eccleſ.* 9. 1, 2, 3. *No man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before him; all things come alike to all, there is one event to the Righteous and to the Wicked, and as is the Good ſo is the ſinner, and he that ſweareth as he that feareth an Oath; this is an evil among all things that are done under the Sun that there is one Event to all.* Since therefore Gods *love* of Good men and *Hatred* of Bad appears not by any thing *before us*, we muſt either conclude that they are *both* Indifferent to him, which would be to *Raſe* the very *Foundations* of Religion, or that there is a *Future* ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments wherein there will be no more ſuch *Promiſcuous* Diſtributions, no more ſuch *Croſs-coupling* of Proſperity with *Vice*, and Miſery with *Virtue*, but all things

things will be Adjuſted *ſutably* to mens *Deſerts* and *Qualifications*, and thoſe that are Good *Advanced* to immortal Glory and Honour, and thoſe that are Bad *Depreſt* into eternal Shame and Confuſion. For the Difference which God makes between them in the *preſent* courſe of his Providence is too *ſmall* and *indiſcernable* to induce us to believe that he makes *any* Difference between them in his *Eſteem* and *Affection*; and therefore either we muſt believe that there is *another* ſtate wherein he makes a *far wider* difference between them, or conclude that they are both *Indifferent* to him, and that he hath no more Regard to the *one* than the *other*, or that he hath no Regard at all to *Either*, which as I ſhewed before, utterly *diſſolves* the Obligations of Religion

III. IT is neceſſary we ſhould believe thoſe Future Rewards and Puniſhments to be *ſuch* as do Infinitely *Tranſcend* any Good we can *reap* in our ſinful *neglect* of God and any Evil we can *incur* by our *ſubmiſſion* to him. 'Tis true, were our natures *equally* inclined to *ſubmit to* or *neglect* him, we ſhould need *no more* Good and Evil to move us *one* way than *t'other*; but the *ſame* Proportion of *Goods* and *Evils* which tempts us now to

Forſake

Forſake and *Abandon* him, would equally tempt us to *ſerve* and *obey* him: but alas, this is far from *our* caſe; for in *ſubmitting* to God we move *counter* to our ſelves, we *croſs* the *Grain* of our *Degenerate* Nature, and *run away* from our deareſt Inclinations; whereas in *forſaking* him, we *Row* with the *Tide*, and are *driven on* with an *impetuous* current of ſinful Luſts and Affections; and the caſe being thus, the temptations on the *one* ſide *muſt* be incomparably *greater*, if ever they prevail with us, than they *need* be on the *other*. For Men are *eaſily* tempted to act in *compliance* with their *own* Inclinations; and the *ſmalleſt* Goods or Evils that can be propoſed to 'em from without, will readily *induce* 'em to do what they have a *mind to*; but to *prevail* with a Man to do that which he is extreamly *averſe* to, to act *againſt* Nature, and live in *defiance* with his own Inclinations, requires a *mighty* force of *outward* temptation; and it muſt be a very *great* Good that he will not *loſe*, a very *formidable* Evil that he will not *incur*, rather than enter into any courſe of action that is *irkſom* and *ungrateful* to his nature. So that unleſs we believe the *Goods* and *Evils* of the *other* World to be *incomparably* greater than all the *pleaſures* of Sin,

Sin, and all the *ſufferings* of Piety and Virtue, there will not be force *enough* in our Faith to *perſuade* us; becauſe *thoſe* future Goods and Evils move *againſt* Nature, and perſuade us to a courſe of life we are extreamly *averſe* to, whereas *theſe* preſent ones *join hands* with our Inclinations, and find a ready *concurrence* in our wills and affections; and a very *ſmall* temptation will prevail againſt a *great* one, when it hath Nature, that *Boſom Orator*, to *ſolicite* and *plead for* it. Wherefore unleſs we believe the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* of the *future* ſtate to be ſuch as *infinitely* outweigh thoſe *preſent* Goods and Evils that tempt us to ſin, they will never be able to prevail againſt 'em; becauſe they muſt not only out-tempt *them*, but, which is the much harder task of the two, they muſt out-tempt the *Reluctances* of our *Degenerate* nature; and yet for *future* Goods and Evils to out-tempt *preſent* ones is not ſo *eaſie* a matter neither; eſpecially if *thoſe* future ones are *inviſible* and out of the Ken of our *ſenſe*, which is the caſe here. For *Futurity* leſſens all Objects to the *Mind*, even as *diſtance* doth to the *Eye*, and makes things appear to us much *ſmaller* than they are in their *own* natures; So that the *futurity* of the Rewards and Puniſhments of

of the *other* life are a mighty *diſadvantage* to 'em when they ſtand in competition with *preſent* Goods and Evils; becauſe the *later* appear to us in their *full* Proportion, and Magnitude, with *all* their tempting circumſtances about 'em, whereas the *former* exhibit to us a *dim* and *confuſed* Landskip of things *afar off*, of things which we never *ſaw* nor *felt*, and which by reaſon of their *diſtance* imprint very *dark* Idea's on our minds. And as their Futurity *leſſens* their appearance, and renders it *confuſed* and *indiſtinct*, ſo their Inviſibility *weakens* their *force* and *influence* on our minds, which no Objects can ſo *nearly* affect as thoſe that ſtrike upon our *Senſes*. So that unleſs by an *immenſe* magnitude they *compenſate* for being *future* and *inſenſible*, it is impoſſible they ſhould prevail with ſuch minds as *ours* againſt *preſent* and *ſenſible* Goods and Evils. Wherefore to render our belief of a future State *effectual* to reduce us to God and our Duty, it's *abſolutely* neceſſary we ſhould believe the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* of it to be *infinitely greater* than all the *Goods* and *Evils* that can tempt us to Sin; and that not only becauſe our natures are extreamly *averſe* to that which *theſe* Rewards and Puniſhments tempt us to, but becauſe the

the Goods and Evils which tempt us the *contrary* way have the *prevailing* Advantages of being *preſent* and *ſenſible*.

IV. And laſtly, IT is neceſſary we ſhould believe that there is no *other* way for us to *acquire* theſe Rewards or *avoid* theſe Puniſhments, but by *ſubmitting* to the Obligations of Religion. For to be throughly *convinced* and *perſuaded* of the *immenſe* Rewards and Puniſhments of the *other* life, is by no means *ſufficient* to reduce us unto God, ſo long as we do but *Dream* of any *poſſible* way to *obtain* thoſe Rewards and *avoid* thoſe Puniſhments *without* ſubmitting to *Him*, to which above all *imaginable* ways our *corrupt* nature hath the greateſt *Antipathy*. So that though we were never ſo much *convinc'd* of the abſolute neceſſity of *eſcaping* Hell and *purchaſing* Heaven, yet if at the *ſame* time we have a proſpect of any *other* way or means of effecting it, to be ſure we ſhall ſhun *this* this moſt *ungrateful* one of *forſaking* our Sins and *returning* to God. And if *liſting* our ſelves into *Godly Parties*, or putting on a *demure* and *ſanctified* countenance, if being *moped*, *dejected* or *unſociable*, if *whining* or *faſting*, or *long prayers*, or an *affected* Gurb, or *rigid* obſervance of holy Times; if conſuming our

our lives in a *barefooted* Pilgrimage, or *wearing* a hair Shirt, or *whipping* our Bodies, or *ſpending* our Eſtates in *Maſſes* and *Indulgencies*; if being made free of a *holy Confraternity*, or *viſiting* Altars and Shrines, or *numbering* Prayers, like Faggots by a *Tally* of *Beads*; if theſe or any of theſe will but ſecure us of *Heaven* and from going to *Hell*, we ſhall think 'em a thouſand times more *tolerable* and *eaſie* than to *ſubmit* our wills to *God* in all the inſtances of true *Piety* and *Vertue*; in the doing of which we muſt *ſtrangle* the corrupt inclinations of our nature, *tear* our beloved Luſts from our hearts, *rack off* our earthy affections from their Lees, and *refine* and *ſpiritualize* 'em into a divine *Zeal*, and *Love* and *Devotion*, than which there is nothing in the World more *irkſom* to a *degenerate* nature. So that 'till we are reduc'd to an utter *deſpair* of *reaping* the Rewards and *eſcaping* the Puniſhments of the other Life by any *other* means than *this* of *ſubmitting* our ſelves to the Obligations of Religion, our *faith* will be altogether *ineffectual*.

SECT. II.

What Evidence *there is to* induce *us to* believe *these future* Rewards *and* Punishments.

THAT there *are* future *Rewards* and *Punishments* is a Doctrine *universally* assented to by all *Ages*, and *Nations*, and *Religions*, and there is scarce any *first Principle* in Phisosophy, in which Mankind are more *generally* agreed. Thus among the Heathen *Poets*, *Divines* and *Philosophers*, there is an *unanimous* acknowledgment of these *future* States, although their *descriptions* of 'em are generally nothing but the *dreams* of an *extravagant* fancy. For so as *Josephus* observes, speaking of the *Essenes* Doctrine concerning the future State of the blessed ταῖς μὲν ἀγαθαῖς ψυχαῖς ὁμοδοξοῦντες πασὶν Ἑλλήνων, &c. *i.e. they teach, as all the* Greek *Nations also do, that for good Souls there are blessed Seats prepared beyond the Ocean in a Region that is always free from Rain and Snow, and excessive heats, being perpetually fanned with gentle breeses from the Ocean*; which descri-

description he hath translated almost *verbatim* out of the 4th. Book of *Homers Ulyssea*, where he brings in *Proteus* thus bespeaking *Menelaus*, σες ἠλύσιον πεδίον, καὶ πείρατα γάιη, &c. i.e. *The Gods shall send thee to the Fields of* Elysium *which lie on the utmost parts of the Earth where thou shalt live secure and happy, there being neither Rain, nor Snow, nor Winter, but the blessed Inhabitants are perpetually refresh'd with the gentle breathing of cool Zephyrs from the Ocean.* *Plato* tells us of an antient Law concerning Men, καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἐστὶν ἐν θεοῖς. τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν μὲν δικαίως τὸν βίον διελθόντα καὶ ὁσίως, ἐπειδὰν τελευτήσῃ, εἰς μακάρων νήσους ἀπιόντα, οἰκεῖν ἐν πάσῃ εὐδαιμονίᾳ ἐκτὸς κακῶν τόν δὲ ἀδίκως καὶ ἀθέως, εἰς τὸ τῆς τίσεως καὶ δίκης δεσμωτήριον, ὁ δὲ τάρταρον καλοῦσιν, ἰέναι, i. e. *which was always and is still in force among the Gods, that those who lived just and holy lives should after their death go into the Isles of the blessed, where they should enjoy all manner of happiness without the least intermixture of misery; but that those who lived here unjustly and ungodly should be sent into that Prison of just punishment, which is called Hell*, Plat. Gorg. *p.* 312. Thus also *Tully Tuscul.* lib. 1. *permanere animos arbitramur consensu natio-*

num omnium, i. e. *We believe, as all Nations do, that the Souls of Men do ſurvive their Bodies*; and to name no more, *Seneca Epiſt.* 117. tells us, *Cum de animarum æternitate diſſerimus, non leve momentum apud nos habet conſenſus omnium aut Timentium Inferos, aut Colentium*, i. e. *when we diſcourſe of the Eternity of Souls, the general conſent of all Men either fearing or worſhipping the Helliſh powers is of very great moment.* And indeed this belief of the *future ſtates* being ſo *generally* imprinted on Mens minds is a very *probable* argument of the *reality* of them, it being hardly *conceivable*, how the Reaſon of *all* mankind ſhould have ſo *unanimouſly* conſented in it, had it not been *extreamly* agreeable to the *make* and *frame* of our minds, and we cannot ſuppoſe any *falſe* propoſition to be *agreeable* to the frame of our mind, without reflecting *diſhonourably* upon the *truth* of him that framed it. And indeed this notion of a future ſtate is ſuch as hath been generally imbraced by *thoſe* Perſons who are *leaſt* capable of *deducing* it by a *Logical* dependence of *one* thing upon *another*, and therefore ſince it hath no *dependency* in their minds on any other *antecedent* notion, how could it have been ſo *generally* entertain'd, did not the *common*

mon dictate of Nature or Reaſon acting *alike* in all Men, move 'em to *conſpire* in it, though they knew not one anothers minds. For it hath been believed with a kind of *repugnancy* to *ſenſe*, which diſcovers all things round about it to be *mortal*, and which upon that account would have been too apt to have ſeduced *ruder* minds into a disbelief of any *other* ſtate; had not ſome more *powerful* impreſſion on their Souls *forcibly* urg'd 'em to believe it.

But becauſe this Argument drawn from *univerſal conſent* is liable to ſome little exception, I ſhall not *inſiſt* upon it, but indeavour to prove the reality of this future ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments from theſe Topicks:

Firſt, From the *Wiſdom* of God's *Government.*

Secondly, From the *Juſtice* of his *Providence.*

Thirdly, From the *natural capacity* of our Souls to *ſurvive* our Bodies, and to *enjoy* future Rewards, and *ſuffer* future Puniſhments.

Fourthly, From the *natural expectance* we have of future Rewards, and *dread* of future Puniſhments.

Fifthly, From the excellent *frame* and *ſtructure* of humane Nature.

Sixthly, From the *Teſtimony* of the *Chriſtian Religion.*

I. FROM the *Wiſdom* of God's *Government.* That *Mankind* is under the *Government* of God, is evident from that Law which he hath *imprinted* on our nature, by which our actions are *diſtinguiſh'd* into *Good* and *Evil, Virtuous* and *Vitious*; of which ſufficient proof hath been given, *Ch.* 1. and ſince God hath *given* a *Law* to our natures, there is no doubt to be made but he hath taken ſufficient care to *inforce* the *obſervance* of it by *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, otherwiſe his Government over us would be very *inſecure* and *precarious.* For that *Law giver* doth only *Petition* his Subjects to *obey*, who doth not *promiſe* ſuch *rewards* and *denounce* ſuch *penalties* as are ſufficient to *oblige* 'em thereunto.

BUT now there is no *Reward* can be *ſufficient* to oblige us to *obey*, which doth not abundantly *compenſate* any *loſs* or *evil* we may *ſuſtain* by our *obedience*; no *puniſhment* ſufficient to *deter* us from *diſobeying* that doth not far *ſurmount* all the *Benefits* and *Pleaſures* which we can hope to *reap* from our *Diſobedience*; but unleſs there

there be a *future* ſtate, the Law of Nature can propoſe no *ſuch* Rewards and Puniſhments to us. For if we have nothing to *dread* or *hope for* beyond the *Grave*, our *preſent* intereſt is *all* our concern, and in reaſon we ought to judg things to be *Good* or *Evil* according as they *promote* or *obſtruct* our *temporal* happineſs. Now though it is certain that in the *general* there is a *natural* good accrewing to us from all *vertuous* actions; as on the contrary a *natural* evil from all *vitious* ones; and it is *ordinarily* more conducive to our *temporal* Intereſt to *obey* than to *diſobey* the Law of our natures; yet there are a world of *inſtances* wherein Vice may be more *advantageous* to us than Vertue, *abſtracting* from the Rewards and Puniſhments of *another* life. It is *ordinarily* better for me to be an *honeſt* Man than a *Knave*; it is more for my *Reputation* and *uſually* for my *Profit* too; and it is more for the *publick good* in which my *own* is involved; but yet in *ſeveral* circumſtances it may be better for me with reſpect only to *this* World to be a *Knave* than an *honeſt* Man. For whenſoever I can cheat ſo *ſecretly* and *ſecurely* as not to fall under the *publique* laſh nor impair my *reputation*, and I can *gain* more by the *Cheat* than I ſhall *loſe*

in the damage of the *Publique*, it will be doubtleſs more *advantageous* for me as to my *worldly* intereſt to *cheat* than to be *honeſt*; and how often ſuch *fair* opportunities of *cozenage* do occur, no Man can be inſenſible that hath but the *leaſt* inſight into the affairs of this World. So that if there were no *future* Rewards and Puniſhments, this great *Law* of *Righteouſneſs* would not have force enough *univerſally* to oblige us; becauſe there are a world of inſtances wherein we might *gain* more *good* and *eſchew* more *evil* by doing *unrighteouſly*, than all its *preſent* Rewards and Puniſhments do amount to. And the ſame may be ſaid of all *other* laws of Nature, which without the *great* motives of *future* happineſs and miſery can no *longer* induce Men to obey 'em than it is for their *temporal* intereſt to do ſo. For ſuppoſe I can ſecretly *ſtab* or *poiſon* a Man whom I *hate* or *dread*, or from whoſe death I may reap any conſiderable *advantage*, what ſhould *reſtrain* me from it? If you ſay the *Law of Nature*, pray what *Reward* doth the Law of Nature *propoſe* that is ſufficient to *compenſate* for the *diſatisfaction* of my *Revenge*, or for the *danger* I run in ſuffering my *Enemy* to *live*; or what *puniſhment* doth the Law of Nature *denounce* that

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can *ballance* the *advantage* of a thouſand or perhaps ten thouſand pounds a year that may *accrew* to me by his death?

IF you ſay the Law of Nature *propoſes* to me the reward of a *quiet* and *ſatisfied* Mind, and *denounces* the puniſhment of a *guilty* and *amazed* Conſcience; I eaſily anſwer, that this *peace* and *horror* which is conſequent to the *forbearance* or *commiſſion* of ſin, ariſes from the *hope* and *dread* of *future* Rewards and Puniſhments; which being taken away, to *ſin* or *not* ſin will be *indifferent* as to any *peace* or *horror* that can follow upon it; and when *this* reſtraint is taken off, what *conſideration* will there be left that is ſufficient to *withhold* me from the *bloody* fact, when ever I have an opportunity to act it *ſecurely*, and am *furiouſly* ſpurred on to it by my own *Revenge* and *Covetouſneſs*? So that if there be no Rewards and Puniſhments in *another* life to *inforce* the commands of the Law of Nature, it's certain that there are no ſuch annex'd to it in *this* as are *univerſally* ſufficient to *oblige* us to obſerve 'em. For as for the Goods and Evils of *this* life, they are *ordinarily* diſtributed among Men with ſo little *reſpect* and *diſcrimination*, as not only to *occaſion* but to *juſtifie* that famous obſervation of the Wiſe Man, that *all things*

things happen alike to all. Either therefore there are *other* Goods to be hoped for, and *other* Evils to be feared, or there are a world of *cases* wherein God hath not *sufficiently* provided to *secure* our obedience to the *Law* of our *Nature*; and to imagine that God ſhould *give* a Law to his Creatures, and take no care to *ſecure* the *Authority* of it, is a moſt *ſenſleſs* Blaſphemy of the *Wiſdom* of his *Government*; for this would be to *expoſe* his own Authority to *contempt*, and to *caſt* his Laws at the *feet* of his Creatures to be *ſpurned* and *trampled on* by 'em at their pleaſure.

IF it be Objected, that all that this Argument proves, is, that to *ſecure* our *obedience* to the Law of Nature, it's *neceſſary* we ſhould *believe* that there are future Rewards and Puniſhments; but that it doth not hence follow that 'tis *neceſſary* that there ſhould *be* future Rewards and Puniſhments; becauſe whether there *be* any ſuch things or *no*, our *belief* of 'em will be *ſufficient* to *ſecure* the Authority of the Law; I anſwer, That if our *belief* of future Rewards and Puniſhments be *neceſſary*, one of theſe two things muſt inevitably follow; either that the Objects of our Belief are *real*, which is the thing I am proving, or that to *countenance* the

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Authority of his Laws, it's neceſſary for God to *impoſe* upon our faith, and *deceive* us into the belief of a *falſhood*. For if to *inforce* God's Law, it's neceſſary we ſhould *believe* that there are future Rewards and Puniſhments, either there muſt *be* ſuch things *really exiſting*, or God muſt inforce his Law with *our* belief of a falſhood; and to imagin, that when God *might* have created for us a *future* ſtate of Reward and Puniſhment, if he had ſo *pleaſed*, and governed us by the *hopes* and *fears* of it, he hath rather choſen to govern us by *Tricks* and *Lyes*, and to *wheedle* us into obedience by a *cheat* and *deluſion*, is a Blaſphemy no leſs *ſenſleß* than *horrid*. Since therefore to *ſecure* the *Authority* of that Law by which the humane Nature is to be governed, it is neceſſary that it ſhould be *inforc'd* with the motives of *everlaſting* Reward and Puniſhment, one of theſe three things *neceſſarily* follows; either that God hath not *ſufficiently* inforc'd his Law, which is a *foul* imputation on his *Wiſdom*, or that he is *fain* to inforce it with a *Lye*, which is an *impious* reflection on his *Truth*, or that there *are* everlaſting Rewards and Puniſhments.

II. FROM the *Juſtice* of the divine *Providence*. For if there *be* a divine *Providence* preſiding over the World (as, that there *is*, hath been already ſufficiently proved) *Juſtice* and *Equity*, which is the moſt *glorious* perfection of an *Over-ruling power*, muſt neceſſarily be *included* in the notion of it. For without *Juſtice*, overruling power is nothing but an *impotent Tyranny*, which to attribute to God is far more *diſhonourable* and *incongruous* to the nature of his perfections, than to ſtrip him of *all* Providence, as *Epicurus* did, and *ſhut* him up in the heavens in a ſtate of everlaſting *Sloth* and *Luxury*. For *not* to Govern, is only to *do Nothing*; but to Govern without *Juſtice*, is to do *Miſchief*; and 'tis a much *leſs* Derogation from the Perfection of any Being, to ſuppoſe it to be *Idle* than to ſuppoſe it to be *Miſchievous*. So that allowing that God, who is the moſt *perfect* of all Beings, *governs* the World, it would not be only *Blaſphemous*, but *Nonſenſe* to imagine that he governs it *unjuſtly*. Now the proper *juſtice* of *Government* conſiſts in the *Equality* of its *Diſtributions*; for ſince there is ſuch a thing as *immutable* Good and Evil in the actions of *free* and *reaſonable* Agents, it is naturally *fit* and *due* that thoſe who *do* good ſhould

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receive good, and thoſe who *do* evil, evil, from *their* hands who have the *Government* of actions; and this *proportionably* to the *good* and *evil* of their doings. So that Gods *Governing* the World *juſtly*, conſiſts in *Diſtributing* good to thoſe that do good, and evil to thoſe that do evil, or in other words in *Proportioning* Rewards and Puniſhments to men according to the *Good* and *Evil* he finds in their *actions*; and unleſs we ſuppoſe him to do *this*, it is *nonſenſe* to imagine that he Governs the World.

But if all his Diſtributions are confined to *this* life, and there is neither Reward nor Puniſhment to be expected from him in *another*, there are *infinite* inſtances of his Providence wherein it will be impoſſible to *defend* his *equality* and *juſtice*. For if there be no other Scene of *good* and *evil*, *reward* and *puniſhment*, but only *this* life, all the *afflicted good* and *proſperous bad* men that ever were in the World, of which there *infinite* inſtances, are ſo many *reproachful* Monuments of the *woful* inequality of the divine Government. For how many Millions of *brave* Souls have there been, who have thought nothing too *dear* for God and his ſervice, and have *ſacrificed* their luſts, their lives, and their fortunes

fortunes to him, and yet upon *this* ſuppoſal have reaped no other *recompence* for ſo doing but only a *miſerable* life, and a *wofull* death, and an obſcure *diſhonourable* grave? As, on the contrary, how many Millions of Millions of *wicked* men that have lived in open *defiance* to all that is ſacred, and juſt, and good, *blaſphemed* God, *affronted* his authority, and *trampled* upon all the Laws of his Government, and yet, ſuppoſing there is no *other* life, have undergone no *other puniſhment* for ſo doing but to live *proſperouſly*, and die *quietly*, and lie *inſhrined* in a Marble Monument? Now how can we otherwiſe *Apologize* for the *juſtice* of Providence when it thus *croſs-couples* Proſperity with Vice, and Adverſity with Vertue, but only by ſuppoſing this *preſent* life to be only the ſtate of our *Trial* and *Probation*, which will quickly *determine* in our *everlaſting* Recompence or Puniſhment, according as we *behave* and *acquit* our ſelves in it; upon which ſuppoſal the *juſtice* of Providence may be fairly *accounted for*, were the *preſent* diſtributions of it a thouſand times more *unequal* than they *are*? For *then* we need not wonder that good and bad men are at *preſent* ſo *unequally* treated, ſince *now* they are only upon their *Proof* and

and *Trial*, which, as I have ſhewn before, requires *ſuch* a treatment, but their *Reward* and *Puniſhment* is reſerved for *another* ſtate, wherein all theſe *ſeeming* inequalities ſhall be fairly *adjuſted*, and Vertue ſhall be *crowned* with everlaſting *Glory* and *Pleaſure*, and Vice *damn'd* to eternal *horror* and *confuſion*. But if the Goods and Evils of this *preſent* life, are *all* the reward and puniſhment that good and bad Men are to expect, where is the *Juſtice* of the divine Government, that many times *oppreſſes* its Friends, and *advances* its Enemies, and in the concluſion *extinguiſhes* their Beings *together*, and therewith all *poſſibility* of making any future *retribution* of good to the one, or evil to the other? And therefore if it be *true*, that *the Judge of all the World will do righteouſly*, that *firſt or laſt* he will certainly diſtribute his Rewards and Puniſhments to his Subjects accord to the *Merit* and *Demerit* of their actions, it muſt be *as* true, that for the *main* he hath *reſerved* the doing it to a *future* ſtate; ſince it cannot be denied but that at *preſent* he very often doth the quite *contrary*; and if it be but as evident that there is *ſuch* a future ſtate as it is that God governs the

the World *juſtly*, I think 'tis as *fair* an aſſurance of it as any *modeſt* Man can require.

III. FROM the *natural capacity* of our Souls to *ſurvive* our Bodies, and *enjoy* future Rewards and *ſuffer* future Puniſhments, it alſo follows that there *is* a future ſtate of Reward and Puniſhment. For we find in our Souls a certain innate *force* and *power*, whereby they *determine* themſelves which way they *pleaſe* in their *motions* and *operations*; whereby they are exempt from the *neceſſitating* influence of any thing that is *forein* to 'em; and this innate *liberty* or *power* of *ſelf-determination* is neceſſarily ſuppoſed in the management of *all* humane Affairs; in *Commerce* and *Treaties*, in *Government* and *Laws* and *Adminiſtrations of Juſtice*, in *Councils*, *Admonitions*, *reproofs* and *perſuaſions*: in all which applications are made to our *Souls* as to *free* and *ſelf-determining* Agents, that have the *abſolute* diſpoſal of their *own* motions, and can *direct* 'em which way they *pleaſe*; and indeed were not our Souls left to their own *free* diſpoſal, but *concluded* by the Laws of a *fatal* neceſſity, as we ſee all *material* Agents are, ſuch applications to 'em as *theſe*, would be very *abſurd* and *ridiculous*, and we may as reaſonably

ſonably hope to *tame* Wolves and Tygers by reading *Ethicks* to 'em, or to *ſtill* the North-wind by ſending *Ambaſſadours* to him to propoſe Articles of Peace, as to *prevail* upon Mens minds by *moral* addreſſes and perſuaſions; becauſe if they are not *maſters* of their own *choices*, whatſoever the rigid Laws of *neceſſity* determine 'em to, they muſt neceſſarily *chooſe* in *deſpight* of all *perſuaſions* to the contrary.

Now by this *ſelf-determining* Power our Souls do evidently manifeſt themſelves to be *immaterial* ſubſtances, and conſequently not liable to *Death* and *Corruption*. For if they were *matter* they would be moved like matter, *i. e.* by the *preſſure* or *thruſting* of other matter upon 'em; and it would be no *more* in their power to move any *other* way than that which ſome other matter *preſſes* and *impels* 'em, than it is for a ſtone not to move *upwards* when 'tis *impel'd* by the force which your Arm *impreſſes* on it, and not to move down again when that force is *ſpent*, and 'tis *preſt back* by its own *weight* and *gravity*. Whereas we feel in our Soul an *innate* power to *determine* it ſelf which way it *pleaſes*, and even to move quite *contrary* to all *forein* impreſſions. For when 'tis preſt on by *outward* Object to ſuch and

ſuch *thoughts* and *purpoſes* with all imaginable *vigour*, it often *ſtems* the impetuous Tide, and *thinks* and *purpoſes* the quite *contrary*. How then can that be *matter* which is not *determined* in its motions by matter, but when it *pleaſes* can either move counter to *all* material impreſſions, or of *two* material impreſſions can move counter to the *ſtrongeſt*.

THAT our Souls therefore are *immaterial*, is juſt as evident as that they have *liberty of will*; and that they have liberty of will, needs no other proof than the common *ſenſe* and *feeling* of mankind; and whatſoever eſſence *feels* this freedom *within* it ſelf, whereby it is abſolved from the *rigid* Laws of *matter*, may with all the reaſon in the World conclude it ſelf *immaterial*; and if our Souls are immaterial ſubſtances, to be ſure they can *naturally* ſubſiſt and live *without* theſe Bodies, and muſt *neceſſarily* do ſo unleſs God *deſtroys* 'em, as having no *contrary* qualities or *diviſible* parts, no principles of *death* or *corruption* in 'em; and ſince God hath made our Soul of an *immaterial* and *immortal* nature, we have all the reaſon in the World to conclude that he will not *unravel* his own workmanſhip, but permit it to *ſurvive* its Body, and *enjoy* or *indure* that *happy*

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or *miſerable* Fate which it ſelf hath *choſen* and *made*.

IV. FROM the *natural expectance* we have of future Rewards and *dread* of future Puniſhments, it is alſo evident that there *is* a ſtate of future Rewards and Puniſhments. Thus after the commiſſion of any *flagitious* wickedneſs there *naturally* ariſe *ill-abodings* in Mens minds of a *dire* after-reckoning; and though the Commiſſion be *ſecret* and *conceal'd* from all humane cognizance, ſo that there is no reaſon to *dread* the corrections of *publique Juſtice* for it, yet when ever the Man *reflects* on it, it fills his mind with *horrible* preſages of a *woful* Futurity; as, on the contrary, when ever a Man doth any *great* good or conquers any *violent* temptation to evil, it *lifts up* his Soul into a *bleſſed* expectation, and *ſwells* his hope with the *promiſe* of a future Reward; and though the good he hath *done*, or the evil he hath *avoided*, gives him no kind of proſpect of any *preſent* advantage, yet his mind is *ſoothed* and *raviſhed* with the contemplation of it, which naturally *ſuggeſts* to him the *joyous* hopes of a recompence to come. For, whence ſhould this *hope* and *dread* ſpring up in Mens minds upon the Commiſſion of *good* and *bad* actions, but from ſome

common impreſſion upon humane nature, intimating to us a *future* ſtate of Reward and Puniſhment? If you ſay, 'tis from thoſe *religious* Principles which we *imbibe* in our Education; I would fain know how came this Principle concerning the future ſtate to be ſo *univerſally* imbibed, if there were not ſomething in it that is very *agreeable* with the reaſon of *all* mankind? For, whatever is the matter, wee ſee 'tis very *eaſily* embraced, but very *difficultly* parted with; Mens Minds do *catch* at it with a ſtrange kind of *greedineſs*, but when once they have *ſwallowed* it, it never comes up again without *ſtraining* and *violence*; and what ſhould be the reaſon of this, if there were not ſomething in it that is very *agreeable* with the natural *taſt* and *relliſh* of our *underſtandings*? We know there have been *great* Wits and Philoſophers that have taken as much pains to *raſe* the belief of a future ſtate *out* of Mens minds as ever any others did to *imprint* it there; and yet though their Doctrine hath been always highly *befriended* by Mens wicked *luſts* and *affections*, to which the belief of a future ſtate is the moſt *terrible* and *vexatious* thing in the World, yet with all their *Wit* and *Sophiſtry* they have never been able to *root*

it

it out of Mens minds. If then our *hopes* and *fears* of another World be *merely* owing to our *Teaching* and *Education*, why ſhould not teaching *eraſe* as well as *imprint* 'em; eſpecially when it is ſo *powerfully* ſeconded with all the *Boſom Rhetorick* of Mens *vitious* inclinations? Whereas on the contrary, thoſe who have moſt *induſtriouſly* attempted to *extinguiſh* their ſenſe of another World, have generally been very *unſucceſsful*, and though in the *Riot* of their *ſinful* delights, they many times *charm* and *ſtupifie* it for the preſent, yet no ſooner do they *retire* into themſelves and *coolly* reflect upon their own minds, but it preſently *awakes* again, and *haunts* and *purſues* 'em; and though they uſe all *imaginable* ways to *divert* their minds from the thoughts of *another* world, and, to avoid theſe Boſom *Accuſers* and *Tormentors*, run for Sanctuary to all things *without* 'em, to *Sports* and *Recreations*, to *Wine* and *Women*, to *Care* and *Buſineſs*, yet ſtill they *purſue* 'em, and ever and anon *break in* upon 'em, and *ſcare* and *terrifie* 'em; and becauſe their minds are ſo *haunted* with theſe importunate terrours of the *World to come*, they are affraid to look *inwards*, but are fain to live *abroad* in their own defence, as not daring to truſt

themſelves *alone* with themſelves; all which are plain *Preſages* of a *future* Judgment and Vengeance that *awaits* wicked Souls after *this* life. For if this dread of future Puniſhment be *natural* to us (as its ſticking ſo *cloſely* and *univerſally* to humane Nature plainly argues it is) it muſt be *impreſt* on us by the great *Author* of Nature; and for him to impreſs a Paſſion on us which hath no *real* Object, would be to impoſe a *Cheat* upon our Natures and *abuſe* our minds with a *falſe* Alarm. So that either we muſt ſuppoſe that God hath implanted in our Natures a *dread* of that which *is not*, which is a *diſhonourable* reflection on his *Truth* and *Veracity*; or that there is *really* a future Puniſhment anſwerable to *that* dread.

AND as the *dread* of future Puniſhment is *natural* to us when we do *ill*, ſo the *deſire* and *expectance* of future Reward is *no leſs* natural to us when we do *well*. For I dare boldly ſay there never was any *vertuous* Man, of whatſoever *Nation* or *Religion*, or *ſect of Philoſophers*, whoſe mind hath not been winged with *earneſt* hopes and deſires of a *future* happineſs, and there is none that ever yet either *denied* or *deſpair'd* of it, but only ſuch as have firſt *debauched* the very Principles of their Nature.

ture. For such it's evident were the *Sadduces* and *Epicureans*, sects of Men that had *drowned* all that was *humane* in 'em in *sensuality* and *voluptuousness* and are *branded* upon Record for their shameful Indulgence to their own *brutish* Genius; and such are no *Standards* of humane Nature, but ought rather to be look'd upon as *Monsters* of Men. And therefore as we do not judg of the natural *Figures* and *proportions* of humane Bodies by *monstrous* and *mishapen* births, so neither ought we to judg of what is *natural* or *unnatural* to Men by those *brutes in humane shape*, who, by submitting their *Reason* to their *passions* and *Appetites*, have *disfigur'd* their Natures and *distorted* it into an unnatural Position; But if we would know what is *humane* and *natural* to us, we must take our measures from those who live most *conformably* to the *Laws* of a *Rational Nature*; and these are they whom we call *Pious* and *Virtuous*, who are therefore to be look'd upon as the *true* Standards of *humane* Nature, by whom we may best *judg* of what is *natural* and *unnatural* to us; and if we judg by *these*, we shall most certainly find that *Virtue*, and the *hopes* of *Immortality* are so nearly allied, that like *Hippocrates* Twins they live and die together. For though while

Men live a *brutiſh* and *ſenſual* Life, their *future* hopes are uſually *drowned* in their *preſent* Enjoyments; yet when once they recover out of this *unnatural* ſtate, and begin to live like *reaſonable* beings, immediately they feel great *deſires* and *expectations* of a future happineſs *ſpringing up* in their minds, and ſo *ariſing* higher and higher proportionably as they *advance* in virtue and goodneſs; which is a plain evidence that theſe hopes and deſires are *natural* to us and *interwoven* with the *frame* and *conſtitution* of our Souls. But now how can it conſiſt with the *goodneſs* of God to *implant* ſuch deſires and hopes in our Natures, and then *withhold* from 'em that which is the only Object that can *ſute* and *ſatisfie* 'em? For as a great Divine of our own hath well obſerved, *Other* Beings, we ſee, have no *natural* deſire *in vain*, the good God having ſo ordered things that there are *Objects* in Nature *apportioned* to all their natural *Appetites*; but if there be no *future* ſtate of happineſs reſerved for *good* Men, *We* are by a natural Principle moſt ſtrongly *inclined* to that which we can never *attain* to; as if God had *purpoſely* framed us with ſuch *inclinations*, that ſo we might be perpetually *tormented* between thoſe two Paſſions *Deſire* and *Deſpair*,

ſpair, an earneſt *propenſion* after a future Happineſs, and an utter *incapacity* of enjoying it; as if Nature it ſelf whereby all *other* things are diſpoſed to their *perfection* did ſerve only in *Man* to make him *miſerable*, and, which is more conſiderable, as if *Virtue* which is the *perfection* of *Nature*, did only ſerve to contribute to our *infelicity*, by raiſing in us ſuch *deſires* and *expectations* as without a future Happineſs muſt be for ever *diſappointed*. But if this *Deſire* and *Expectation* be *natural* to us, as it evidently is, it muſt be implanted there by the *God of Nature*, with whoſe *truth* and *goodneſs* it can never *conſiſt* to inſpire us with ſuch *Deſires* and *Hopes* as he knows have no *Object* in the *nature of things*, and ſo can never be *fulfilled* and *accompliſh'd*.

V. FROM the excellent *frame* and *conſtitution* of humane Nature, it's alſo evident that there is a future ſtate of Reward and Puniſhment. For whoever ſhall impartially conſider the *frame* of our Natures, will eaſily diſcern that we are made for much *greater* purpoſes than to enjoy *this* World, and that our *faculties* are as much too *big* for theſe *ſenſitive* fruitions as the Channel of the *Ocean* is for the ſtreams of a *little* River. For the *higheſt* happineſs we can

frame

frame an Idea of, is the *enjoyment* of God by *contemplation* and *love* and *imitation* of his Perfections, as I have proved at large, *Part.* 1. *c.* 3. which doth as far excel all *Worldly* happineſs, as the Enjoyments of a *Prince* do the pleaſures of a *Fly*; and yet it is evident that our minds are framed with a natural *capacity* of enjoying this *ſupream* Beatitude, *i.e.* of *contemplating*, and *loving* and *imitating* God. For as for the *Being* and *Exiſtence* of God, all things round about us *preach* and *proclaim* it, and which way ſoever we turn our Eyes we behold the *footſteps* of his *Power* and *Wiſdom*; and being endowed with a *reaſoning* faculty, we can eaſily *aſcend* to the *infinite* Perfections of *his* Nature by thoſe *borrowed* Perfections we behold in his *Creatures*, which are ſo many lively *Comments* and *Paraphraſes* upon him, and ſo far forth as they are Perfections, muſt neceſſarily *meet* and *concenter* in him; and then ſuch is the frame of our natures, that from the *contemplation* of the *Beauty* and *Perfection* of any Being, we naturally proceed to *admire* and *love* it; ſo that unleſs our *wills* be violently *prejudiced* againſt the *Perfections* of God, our *contemplation* muſt neceſſarily kindle our *love* of 'em; and then thoſe Perfections

ons which we *love* and *admire* in another, we are *naturally* ambitious to *transcribe* into our selves; so that being once *inflamed* with the love of God, *that* will be continually *prompting* us to *imitate* him, and *that* will by degrees *mould* us into a fair and glorious *resemblance* of him. Thus God hath *implanted* in the very *frame* of our Nature a most *forward* capacity of *enjoying* himself, which in the *perfection* of it infinitely *transcends* all that can be imagined in a *terrestrial* Paradise. And yet though we have faculties that we are sure are *naturally* capable of *enjoying* him to *Perfection*; of contemplating him without *weariness*, of *loving* him without *aversion*, of *imitating* him without *difficulty* or *interruption*; in this *present* state of things it is *morally* impossible we should ever *arise* to it. For our faculties are *clog'd* with so many *sinful* prejudices, *interrupted* with so many *bodily* necessities, *diverted* with so many *secular* occasions, that it cannot be *reasonably* expected even from the *best* Men in the World, that they should in this life *approach* the *Perfection* of the *happiness* of *divine Enjoyment*; especially if there were no *other* life but this, for then it would be *folly* so much as to *attempt* it. For what Man in his *Wits* would ever

ver think it worth the while to ſpend a *conſiderable* part of his life in *waging War* with himſelf, *mortifying* his Affections, *croſſing* and *ſtarving out* his deareſt inclinations (which yet he *muſt* do ere he can arrive to any *comfortable* degree of *divine Enjoyment*) if there were no *other* recompence to be expected *at laſt*, but to live a few days *longer* in a *Rapturous Muſe*, and then lie down in everlaſting *darkneſs* and *inſenſibility*. Were he not a thouſand times better *pleaſe* and *gratifie* himſelf at preſent, *content* his craving *deſires* with the goods that are before him, and take his *fill* of thoſe ſenſual *delights* that readily *offer* themſelves to his Enjoyment, than *run away* from 'em in a *long* and *weariſom* queſt of *ſpiritual* joys, which for all he knows he may never *arrive to*, or if he *doth*, is ſure within a *few* moments to be *deprived* of for ever. So that if there be no other ſtate but *this*, it's plain we are made *naturally* capable of the *higheſt* happineſs to *no purpoſe*; we are naturally capable of *enjoying* God, and yet ſuch are our circumſtances in *this* preſent ſtate, that if there be no *other*, it is not to be *expected* we ſhould ever *arrive* to any *high* degree of Enjoyment, and if it *were*, all things conſider'd 'twould be an egregious

piece

piece of *folly* to *attempt* it; Now how can it conſiſt either with the divine *Wiſdom* or *Goodneſs* to create in us ſuch *vaſt* capacities of *ſpiritual* happineſs, and then place us in *ſuch* circumſtances wherein 'twould be both *imprudent* and *in vain* for us to purſue any *other* happineſs but what is *carnal* and *ſenſual*? No *wiſe* Man would build a Houſe unleſs he meant it ſhould be *inhabited*; and can we imagine that the *All-wiſe* God would ever have created in us ſuch *vaſt* and *boundleſs* capacities of happineſs, merely to *ſtand empty* and be for ever *uninhabited*; that he who always propoſes to himſelf the moſt *noble* and *worthy* ends of his Actions, would ever have form'd in us ſuch *ſuperfluous* capacities, or built ſuch *ſpacious* Rooms in our Nature when he never intended to make any *uſe* of 'em?

And then conſidering the *Goodneſs* as well as *Wiſdom* of God, what *likelihood* is there that he ſhould create ſuch *ample* capacities in our Nature and furniſh it with ſuch *excellent* faculties, for no other end but to enjoy the *trifling* goods of *this* life; that he who hath created goods for all *other* creatures that are every way *adequate* to their natural *capacities*, ſhould make *us* capable to *partake* of the felici-

ties

ties of *Angels*, and then *ſtake us down* to the pleaſures of *Swine*? Eſpecially conſidering that by making us *capable* of a higher happineſs and *ſenſible* of our own *capacity*, he hath almoſt *neceſſitated* us to *expect* and *deſire* it; and what is *this*, if he doth not *intend* it for us, but to create in us an *appetite* merely to *vex* and *tantalize* it; as if it were a *recreation* to him to ſit above in the Heavens and behold the work of his own hands ſpending it ſelf in *weary* ſtruglings towards him, and *vex'd* all the while it continues in Being with an *impotent* deſire of that which it ſhall never *enjoy*, and which by giving it a *capacity* to enjoy he hath *encouraged* it to *deſire* and *expect*.

VI. And laſtly, FROM the *Teſtimony* of the *Chriſtian Religion* it is alſo evident that there is a future ſtate of Reward and Puniſhment; which in moſt *expreſs* terms *aſſures* us of *another* life beyond *this*, wherein we ſhall be for ever *happy* or *miſerable* according to what we have *done in the fleſh*; So that we have as *full* evidence of the *reality* of future Rewards and Puniſhments as we have of the *truth* of Chriſtianity, and as *full* evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity as all the *miraculous* works of our *Saviour* can give, and as *full* evidence of the

truth

truth of *his* Miracles as the moſt *credible* Teſtimony of *eye witneſſes* can give, who not only *confirmed* their Teſtimony by *other* Miracles of *their own*, but at the laſt *ſealed* it with their *bloud*, which is the higheſt *ſecurity* that mortal men can give of their *fidelity*; but though this Argument be of all others the moſt *convincing* and *ſatisfactory*, yet I ſhall inſiſt no *farther* on it in this place, becauſe I ſhall have occaſion to proſecute it *at large* in the ſeventh Chapter.

SECT. III.

By what means *this* belief *of divine Rewards and Puniſhments is to be* begotten *and* confirmed *in us.*

THOUGH the *evidences* of future Rewards and Puniſhments be ſuch as are *ſufficient* to convince any *reaſonable* mind, yet it is evident that in this *degenerate* ſtate of our natures there is a *ſtrong* repugnancy to the *lively* belief of them, inſomuch that the *bare* propoſal of evidence is not ſufficient *effectually* to perſuade us; wherefore before we diſmiſs this Argument

gument, it will be neceſſary to add to what hath been ſaid ſuch *means* and *directions*, as, together with the *evidences*, are proper to *diſpoſe* our minds to the *effectual* belief of the future ſtate; and theſe I ſhall reduce to theſe four particulars,

I. IF we would *effectually* believe the future ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments, we muſt *fix* and *inure* our minds to *ſerious* thoughts and conſiderations. For whilſt our minds are taken up with *fancies* and *levities*, with *wild* or *ludicrous* or *incoherent* Ideas, or entertained with the *cares* or *pleaſures* of *this* life, they will not be *at leiſure* to turn their thoughts towards *another* World. For to think *cloſe* of another World requires a very *ſerious* and *thoughtful* mind; becauſe the *other* World doth not preſs upon our *Senſes* as *this* World doth, which whereſoever we turn our ſelves is *continually* thruſting its *Objects* into our minds through our *Eyes* and *Ears*, and whiſpering to our thoughts through the *Organs* of our *Senſes* which are the moſt *immediate* Entries and Inlets to our Mind. So that the other World being *quite* out of ſight, and this *always* in view, it is as difficult for us to keep the one *out* of our Minds as to let the other *in*. For before we can ſet our ſelves

ſelves to think *cloſely* of the *other* World, we muſt *ſhut* our Eyes and Ears to the Objects of *this*; otherwiſe they will *obtrude* themſelves upon us, and *draw away* our thoughts and meditations; we muſt *gather in* our thoughts from the Objects of Senſe that are round about us, *take leave* of this World, and *retire* into our own minds, and *ſhut up* our ſelves within our ſelves, that none of theſe ſenſitive things may *come at* us, and that we may be *wholly* at leiſure to *entertain* our ſelves with the *inviſible* things of another World. And this we ſhall never be able to do ſo long as our Minds are *vain*, and *roving*, and *deſultory*, and poſſeſs'd with *wild* imaginations or *reſtleſs* cares or *extravagant* mirth and Jollities; for theſe things will put our thoughts upon ſo many *vagaries*, and render them ſo *looſe*, and *wild*, and *incoherent*, that they will never be able to *hang* long enough *together* to form any *ſerious* conceptions. So that when we would *fix* them upon the other World we ſhall ſcarce be able to *gather* them *in* from thoſe outward Objects among which they are *ſquandered*; or if we *do*, we ſhall never *keep* them long enough *together* to form any *ſerious* apprehenſions of it; but as ſoon as they have taken a *curſory* view of

it, they will be *flying abroad* again, and *roving* into vanity and impertinence. So that while our Minds are *light* and *vain*, they cannot think *enough* of another World *ſeriouſly* to apprehend and believe it; the Rewards and Puniſhments of that *inviſible* ſtate are things too ſerious for our *wild* thoughts to *dwell on*; and 'till our minds are grown more *fixt* and *ſteady*, till they are more *withdrawn* from ſenſitive Objects, and more *accuſtomed* to *retired thinking*, they will be too *volatile* and *fugitive* ſeriouſly to *apprehend*, and heartily to *believe* a future ſtate. If therefore we would attain to a *firm* belief of it, we muſt indeavour to *reclaim* our *wild* thoughts by accuſtoming our ſelves to *ſerious thinking*; and when by *ſad* and *ſerious* meditations we have rendred our minds more *fixt* and *retired*, we muſt

II. Indeavour to *remove* thoſe *vicious* prejudices which *indiſpoſe* us to the *belief* of future Rewards and Puniſhments. For while men live in oppoſition to God, and have therefore reaſon to apprehend his *diſpleaſure*, this will *ſtrongly* prejudice our minds againſt the *belief* of a future ſtate; becauſe this belief muſt neceſſarily *gall* and *diſturb* us, and render our *vicious* courſes extremely *troubleſom* and *uneaſie*. For when

when a Man is *resolved* to lead an *ill* course of life, and at the same time *believes* it will conclude in eternal wretchedness, his *faith* will be a perpetual *plague* to his Mind, like *Belteshazzar's Mene Tekel* it will *scare* and *alarm* him in his *sinful* Carouses, and *imbitter* the gust of them with many a *sad* thought and *dire* reflection; and 'till he either shakes hands with his *Creed*, or his *ill Resolution*, it will be impossible for him ever to be *quiet*. Whilst therefore he *resolves* to *continue* his ill courses, it is his *interest* to believe there is *no* other World but *this*; he is *obliged* to it in his *own defence*, and as he *hopes* to enjoy *himself*, and *sin* without *disturbance*; and then his interest having *bribed* his *affection*, his affection will be sure so to *biass* his *reason*, that it will be a difficult matter for him to *convince* and *persuade* himself. For if there be future *Rewards*, he knows he hath no *interest* in them; if future *Punishments*, he is conscious he must *feel* and *indure* them; and to *believe* that there are such *goods* as he shall never be the *better* for, and such *evils* as he shall be infinitely the *worse* for, must needs be *extremely* repugnant to his inclinations. For that which men would *not have*, they are *averse* to *believe*; and that which they

are averſe to believe they are not eaſily *convinced of*, becauſe their *averſion* will caſt ſuch a *miſt* before their minds as that they will hardly be able to *diſcern* a fair *Probability* in a clear *Demonſtration*. Wherefore if ever you would arrive at a *firm* belief of the future Rewards and Puniſhments, you muſt indeavour to *diſpel* from your minds thoſe *prejudices* againſt it with which your own *ill* courſes are apt to *inſpire* you, by reſolving with your ſelves to *lay aſide* your ſinful *affections* and *intereſts* while you are *examining* the evidences of another World, and not to ſuffer them to *intermingle* with your *reaſonings*; concluding that in a matter of ſuch *infinite* moment 'tis the greateſt *madneſs* in the world to *think* as you *wiſh* and *believe* as you *affect*; that 'tis not *your* unbelief will either *extinguiſh* the joys of *Heaven*, or *quench* the flames of *Hell*, and that ſince the nature of things will not *bend* to *your* wiſhes, and *be* as *you* would have them, it is your *true* intereſt to *believe* that they are *what* they are, eſpecially in a matter of ſuch infinite concern to you; that if Heaven and Hell are not *dreams* but *realities*, you will moſt certainly *find* them ſo whatever you *think* of them, and that therefore it concerns you as *much* as an

an eternity of happineſs or miſery *amounts* to, to *believe* that they are *real* if they *are* ſo, leſt out of a vain *confidence* that there are *no* ſuch things, you *forfeit* Heaven and *incur* Hell fire. With ſuch thoughts as *theſe* you muſt often *encounter* thoſe *prejudices* which *ſin* raiſes in your minds; and when once you have *conquer'd* them, and *reduced* your minds to an *impartial* deſire of being *rightly informed* in this matter, and in order to that, to give an *equal hearing* to the reaſons on *both* ſides, you are fairly *prepared* for the *belief* of another World, which cannot *fail* to obtain upon your underſtandings, if

III. You *duly* examine thoſe *motives* of *credibility* upon which thoſe future Rewards and Puniſhments are *propoſed*. For though *Faith be the gift of God*, yet it is a *gift* which he *confers* upon us as he doth all his *other* bleſſings, in the uſe of *due* and *proper* means; and as it is *the bleſſing of the Lord that makes rich*, but not without the concurrence of the *diligent hand*, ſo 'tis the *grace* of God that gives us *faith*, but not without *our* application to the *natural* means. Now the natural means of faith is a due *conſideration* of the *evidence* upon which the *matter* to be *believed* is *founded* and

propoſed. For though the matter be never ſo evident in *it ſelf*, yet it is not evident to *us* 'till we have duly *conſidered* it; and if we *believe* without *evidence*, we believe with our *wills*, and not with our *underſtandings*; whereas in *reality* believing is properly an act of the *underſtanding*, whereby it *aſſents* to a thing as *true*, which it cannot do without ſome *proof* and *evidence* that it *is* ſo; and therefore when we aſſent to things as true with our *wills* without our *underſtandings*, or, which is the ſame thing, without *proof* and *evidence*, we cannot ſo properly be ſaid to *believe*, as *not* to *disbelieve* them. For there are a world of things which men do neither *deny* nor *affirm*, *believe* nor *disbelieve*, that is, about which they never *concern* their thoughts, nor *trouble* their heads one way or t'other. And thus it is here; there are many who *pretend* to *believe* another World, but if you ask them *why*, they can give no *reaſon*, nor did they ever *enquire* whether there be *any* to be *given*; ſo that it is plain whatever they *imagine*, they do not *believe* it; for to *believe* without *underſtanding*, is as perfect nonſenſe as to *underſtand* without *evidence*, or *believe* without *faith*. So that *that* which they call *faith*, is only *not disbelieving*; whether

whether there *be* another World or *no*, they never *troubled* their heads to *enquire*, and ſo having *no* evidence *pro* or *con*, their underſtanding doth neither *affirm* nor *deny*, *believe* nor *disbelieve*, but negligently leaves the matter in *ſuſpence* and *uncertainty*.

The natural *means* of *faith* therefore, you ſee, is a due *enquiry* into the *evidence* of the *truth* and *reality* of the things we believe; and therefore if we would *indeed* believe that there is a future World of Rewards and Puniſhments, we muſt ſeriouſly *conſider* the *reaſons* and *evidences* that *prove* and *aſſert* it, and *urge* them *cloſe* to our *underſtandings*, 'till they have *forced* and *extorted* from them a *rational* and *well-grounded* aſſent; which if we *do*, laying aſide all *partiality* and *prejudice*, there is no doubt but they will be found *weighty* enough to *turn the Scale* againſt all *Objections* to the contrary; eſpecially if

IV. And laſtly, You add to all theſe means *fervent* and *hearty* Prayer. For Prayer in *it ſelf* is a very *proper* and *uſeful* means to *beget* and *confirm* in us the *belief* of the other World, becauſe it is an *abſtraction* of the mind from thoſe *ſenſitive* and *material* objects which ſtand

like hills and mountains *between* us and the inviſible World, and *intercept* our *Proſpect* of it. For whenever our mind is engaged in a *ſerious* and *hearty* prayer, it *diſpels* all earthly things before it, and *ſcatters* them out of ſight, and having no *Miſts* or *Clouds* in its way, nothing but a *fair* and *clear* heaven above it, *thither* it directs its *Eyes*, and *Thoughts*, and *Deſires* without any *lett* or *interruption*. Now the very *withdrawing* our minds from *ſenſible* things to converſe with *ſpiritual* and *inviſible* ones, doth, as I ſhewed before, mightily *diſpoſe* us to the belief of another World. When therefore by *frequent* and *hearty* prayer our minds have been accuſtomed to *retire* from the objects of ſenſe, and to *fix* their *thoughts* and *contemplations* upon God, they will be able to turn themſelves with more *eaſe* and *readineſs* to the *inviſible* things of another World, which the more *familiar* they are to us, the better able we ſhall be to *apprehend* and *believe* them.

But then, by our *fervent* and *hearty* prayers we ſhall alſo obtain the *aſſiſtance* of God, without the *concurrence* of whoſe *grace* we can do no *good thing*, and much leſs *effectually* believe the Rewards and Puniſhments of another life, which is the

root

root and *principle* of all true Piety and Virtue. For to the forming a *firm* belief of this Doctrine in our minds, there is required a very *ſevere* and *impartial* conſideration of the *Proofs* and *Evidences* upon which it is *founded*; and conſidering how *vain* and *roving* our thoughts are, how apt to *fly off* from any *ſerious* argument, and eſpecially from *this* of another World, which is ſo *offenſive* to our vicious *appetites* and *affections*, what likelihood is there that we ſhould ever *fix* our mind to ſuch a *through* examination of the Proofs of another World as is neceſſary to *beget* in us a *lively* belief of it, unleſs God, who alone can *command* our thoughts, *co-operates* with us, and *animates* our *faint* indeavours with his *grace* and *aſſiſtance*; unleſs he by *ſuggeſting* the evidences of the future ſtate to us, and by *urging* and *repeating* them, *imprints* them on our minds with all their natural *force* and *efficacy*; in a word, unleſs by *following* our *flying* thoughts with theſe his *holy* inſpirations, and *importuning* them *with*, and almoſt *forcing* them *upon* them, he at laſt prevails with them to *ſtay* and *look back* and *conſider* and *ſeriouſly* to ponder the *weight* and *force* of them, it is very improbable they ſhould ever *abide* long enough upon our minds

to

to *ſettle* into a *firm* and *efficacious* belief. Let us therefore *earneſtly* implore the *aid* and *aſſiſtance* of God, and *beſeech* him frequently to *inſpire* our minds with the *Arguments* of a future life, and to *urge*, and *repeat* and *ſet* them *home* upon our thoughts, 'till by a *due* conſideration of them we have *extracted* all their *force* and *evidence*, and *digeſted* it into a *lively* and *active* belief; and if to the uſe of all the abovenamed means you do but add this of *Prayer* and *Supplication*, you may *depend* upon it, that he who hath promiſed to *open* unto all that *knock*, and to be *found* of all that *ſeek* him, will never *deny* you any *grace* or *aſſiſtance* that is neceſſary to produce in you this *fundamental* Principle of Religion, *viz*, an *effectual belief* of the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* of another world.

To conclude this Argument therefore, ſince *this* belief is ſo *abſolutely* neceſſary to *ſubject* our minds to the *obligations* of Religion, let us endeavour as much as in us lies, to *found* it in our *reaſon*, by *convincing* our minds of the *truth* and *force* of thoſe *evidences* upon which it is *propoſed*. For while we *believe* upon *truſt* and we know not *why*, our faith muſt needs be very *weak* and *infirm*, and like a Tree without root

root in the midſt of a ſtorm, be unable to *outſtand* any *blaſt* of temptation. For the temptations of *ſin* are ſuch *goods* and *evils* as are evident to our *ſenſes*, which do moſt *certainly* aſſure us that there are ſuch things in the World as *pleaſure* and *profit*, *reproach* and *perſecution*; and therefore unleſs when we are *tempted*, our *faith* can *confront* the evidence of *Senſe* with the evidence of *Reaſon*, and produce *good* proof of thoſe *future* Goods and Evils which it puts in the ballance againſt theſe *preſent* temptations, it will hardly be able to *withſtand* 'em. For what likelihood is there that the things which we *believe* without *proof* and *evidence*, ſhould have comparably that *force* and *influence* upon us, as the things which we *know*, and *feel* and *experience*? So that when we come to *oppoſe* a Heaven and a Hell of whoſe *reality* and *exiſtence* we have *no* evidence, to *pleaſures* or *profits*, *reproaches* or *perſecutions*, which ſtrike *immediately* on our *ſenſes*, it is eaſie to *prognoſticate* which will be moſt *prevalent*.

BUT if our *belief* of the future Rewards and Puniſhments be *founded* on ſuch *evidence* as ſatisfies our *reaſon*, what temptation in the World is there that can *prevail* againſt it; what *good* is there that can

out-

outbid Heaven, or what *evil* that can *vie* terrours with Hell? For we ſee by experience that the Objects of our *faith*, when it is grounded upon *ſatisfactory* evidence, do as *much* influence our minds as the Objects of *ſenſe*; they who never ſaw the *Indies* unleſs it were in a *Map*, and ſo can only *believe* that there are ſuch Countries, are yet as *much* affected with the rich Merchandize they abound with as thoſe who have been *there*, and as *ready* to venture their *Eſtates* and *Perſons* thither, through the *danger* of the Sea, in hope of a *proſperous* return. If therefore we believe that there is ſuch a *ſtate* as *Heaven*, with as *full* ſatisfaction of mind as we do that there is ſuch a *place* as the *Indies*, doubtleſs our *Faith* would affect us as much as our *Eyes*, and we ſhould be as *forward* to go to Heaven and venture through all *dangers* and *difficulties* thither, as if we had been there *already* and had *ſeen* with our own Eyes all the *Glories* and *Delights* it *flows* and *abounds* with. So that the evidence of our *Faith*, if it be *clear* and *ſatisfactory*, will as much *affect* our minds as the evidence of our *ſenſe*; and *Heaven* and *Hell* will as *vigorouſly* influence our *hope* and *fear*, if with a *full* ſatisfaction of mind we *believe* 'em, as if we

we had *ſeen* and *felt* 'em. Conceive then that you had ſpent but *one* hour in *Heaven, ſurveying* with your own Eyes the *glories* of that *Place*, the *Triumphs* and *Exultations* of its bleſſed *Inhabitants*, and the *rapturous* Joys and delights wherewith it *entertains* 'em; conceive that after this you had been ſent for *another* hour into *Hell*, and had there been *ſpectators* of the *horrors* and *agonies* of the damned, of their *torture*, and *rage*, and *dire* convulſions of *Soul*, cauſed by a *deſperate* and *remedileſs* miſery; in a word, conceive that after *all*, you had been diſmiſs'd into this World again, to *chooſe* your own fate and *determine* your ſelves to *that* happy or *this* miſerable portion for ever; think now what your *mind* and *reſolution* would be; whether you would not be willing to *loſe* any thing rather than *Heaven*, or to *endure* any thing rather than *Hell*; whether *any* good or evil ſin can *tempt* you withal, would be able to *out-tempt* the Rewards and Puniſhments of Eternity. Doubtleſs no; the *remembrance* you would have of the *infinite* Joys and *intolerable* Miſeries you ſaw in that other World, would prove an *invincible* Antidote againſt *all* temptation. Now what your *ſenſe* of the other World would be if you had *ſeen* it, that will

will your *belief* of it be, when 'tis *founded* upon *clear* and *satisfactory* evidence; 'twill be an *infallible* Counter-charm against the most *bewitching* temptations; 'twill render the *greatest* goods *dreadful* to us that *beckon* us to Hell, and the *greatest* evils *desireable* that *drive* us towards Heaven. For *Faith*, saith the Apostle, *is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. 11. 1. that is, *it* renders its *invisible* Objects as *real* and *evident* to us, as our *sense* doth *visible* ones; and when Heaven and Hell are become as *evident* to our *faith* as sensible things are to our *senses*, what good or evil is there in all the World that can *out-tempt* 'em? For what *good* is there so *good* as Heaven, or what *evil* so *bad* as Hell? So that if our *belief* of the future Rewards and Punishments be but *founded* on such *evidence* as gives a *full* satisfaction to our minds, 'twill *draw* our Souls to God like an *invincible* Loadstone, in despight of all the *oppositions* of temptations from *without*, and of all the *counter-strivings* of a corrupt nature from *within*; and there is nothing in the World will be able to *withstand* it; no *good* or *evil* that sin can *promise* or *threaten* that will have the power to *resist* its *Almighty* persuasions, but 'twill

force

force its own way through all *oppoſitions*, and like an *overflowing* Torrent bear down all our *carnal* conſiderations *before* it.

WHEREFORE if ever we mean to *diſingage* our ſelves from the *ſlavery* of ſin, and entirely to *devote* our ſelves to God and his Service, let us in the uſe of the above-named Means endeavour to *eſtabliſh* our minds in a *firm* and *well-grounded* belief of the other World; that ſo our *faith* being built upon a *ſure* foundation of *Reaſon*, may be able to *outſtand* all the *waves* of temptation, and to chaſe all thoſe goods and evils before it that *ſtand* in the *way* of our *return* to God; and when by our *faith* we have ſo far *overcome* the *World* as to *ſubmit* and *reſign* our ſelves to God in *deſpight* of all its temptations, we ſhall find our *belief* of the other World every day *grow* and *improve* upon our hands, 'till at laſt it *commences* into a *certain* aſſurance. For 'tis not ſo much mens *reaſon* as their *luſts* that do *object* againſt the *reality* of the future World; they are *loth* to believe it, becauſe it *diſturbs* 'em in their *ſinful* enjoyments; and ſo their *will* employs their *reaſon* to *argue* againſt it; and when once their *wills* are engaged in the *controverſie*, a very *ſlender* probability will weigh more on *that* ſide than a *clear* Demon-

monſtration on the *other*. When therefore our wills are *taken off* by a *free* reſignation of 'em to God, all that ſinful *prejudice* which renders us *now* ſo *averſe* to believe, will vaniſh from our minds; and *then* we ſhall ſee things as they *are*, and the *arguments* of another World will appear to our minds with ſuch a *convincing* evidence, as will quickly *diſpel* all our *doubts* and *uncertainties*, and render our *Faith* equivalent to a clear *Viſion*. So that we ſhall paſs through all the temptations of the World with the ſame *conſtancy* and *reſolution* of Soul, as if we walked in *open view* of Heaven and Hell, and theſe *mighty* Objects which do ſo infinitely *tranſcend* all the Goods and Evils which ſin can *tempt* us withal, will have as *victorious* an influence on our lives as if they were *preſent* and did ſtrike *immediately* on our ſenſes. And then how is it poſſible that *any* temptation whatſoever ſhould be able to cope *with* or prevail *againſt* 'em? For he who is *fully* perſuaded of the *reality* of Heaven and Hell, muſt be utterly *abandoned* of all his *reaſon*, if he ſin for any *Goods* ſake that is *leſs* than Heaven, or for any *Evils* ſake that is *leſs* than Hell. When therefore we are *drawn* to God by ſuch *invincible* hopes and fears as the

the *firm* belief of the other World will *ſuggeſt* to us, how is it poſſible that any temptation of ſin ſhould either *diſſuade* us from *coming* to him, or *perſuade* us to *forſake* him? Wherefore it concerns us to take all *poſſible* care to *ground* our faith *well* and *improve* and *ſtrengthen* it, that ſo in deſpight of all temptations it may *influence* our *wills* and *govern* our *practice*, and ſafely *conduct* us through all the *ſnares* of this Life, and at length bring us *home* to everlaſting Happineſs.

CHAP. VI.

Of the neceſſity of having right Apprehenſions *of* God, *in order to our being* truly Religious.

IT is a Noble and Celebrated paſſage of *Epictetus*, Ch. 38. τῆς περὶ τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείας, ἴσθι ὅτι τὸ κυριώτατον ἐκεινό ἔξιν, ὀρθὰς ὑπολήψεις περὶ αὐτῶν ἔχειν ὡς ὄντων καὶ διοικούντων τὰ ὅλα καλῶς καὶ δικαίως, i. e. *Know that the main foundation of Piety is this, to have right apprehenſions of the nature of God, and to be ſenſible*

ſible that he is, and that he governs the World well and juſtly; and accordingly the Pſalmiſt ſpeaking of God, tells us, *They that know thy name will put their truſt in thee*, Pſalm 9. 10. *i. e.* They who have made a true *diſcovery* of thy *Nature*, and by *obſerving* as I have done the glorious *effects* of thy *Wiſdom*, and *Power* and *Juſtice* and *Goodneſs*, have *formed* in their minds *right* and *genuine* apprehenſions concerning thee, will make no ſcruple to place their whole *truſt* and *confidence* in thee; which is *equally* true of all *other* acts of Piety and Religion. For the *true* knowledg of God will as much influence our minds to *love* and *adore* him, to *praiſe* him and *ſubmit* to him, as to put our *truſt* in him; and hence St. *Paul* aſcribes all the *impiety* and *wickedneſs* of the *Gentiles* to their *not liking to retain God in their knowledg*, i. e. to their wicked *averſion* to the *true* and *genuin* Notions of God, *Rom.* 1. 28.

IN the proſecution of this Argument I ſhall endeavour theſe three things:

Firſt, To ſhew in what *reſpects* right apprehenſions of God are *neceſſary* to our being *truly Religious*.

Secondly,

Secondly, To lay down ſome *Rules* for the *forming* of right apprehenſions of God in our minds.

Thirdly, To *aſſign* and *remove* the common cauſes of our *miſapprehenſions* concerning him.

SECT. I.

In what reſpects *right Apprehenſions of God are* neceſſary *to our being* truly Religious.

In general, whatſoever is *requiſite* to render Men *truly religious* muſt be *derived* from *true* apprehenſions of *God*, who is the great *Object* of Religion. For *Religion* being the *rule* of divine Service muſt *it ſelf* be regulated by the divine *Nature*, and without a *right* underſtanding of the nature of God, it is impoſſible we ſhould *regulate* our religion by it. Now to the *right* conduct and *due* regulation of our Religion, it is requiſite, firſt, that we ſhould be *rightly* informed what *ſervices* are *pleaſing* to God; ſecondly, that we proceed upon a *true* Principle *in* ſerving him;

thirdly, that we *direct* our Services to a right *end*; fourthly, that we be *furnished* with ſufficient *motives* to *engage* us to ſerve him; the want of either of which will prove an *irreparable* flaw in the very *foundation* of our Religion, and render the whole not only *infirm* but *defective* in its very conſtitution. And in all theſe *reſpects right Apprehenſions* of God are *indiſpenſably* neceſſary.

Firſt, They are neceſſary to *inform* us what *Services* are *pleaſing* to God.

Secondly, They are neceſſary to *inſpire* us with the true *Principle* upon which we muſt ſerve him.

Thirdly, They are neceſſary to *direct* us to the true *end* for which we muſt ſerve him.

Fourthly, They are neceſſary to furniſh us with proper *motives* and *encouragements* to *engage* us to ſerve him.

I. A *right apprehenſion* of God is neceſſary to *inſtruct* us what *ſervices* are *pleaſing* to God. For to be ſure nothing can be pleaſing to him but what is *agreeable* to the *perfections* of his *Nature*, which are the *Originals* from whence the *eternal* Laws of Religion are *tranſcribed*; unleſs therefore we know what his perfections *are*, how is it poſſible we ſhould know what

ſervices

ſervices are *agreeable* to 'am? If you would ſerve a Prince *gratefully* and *acceptably*, you muſt inform your ſelf beforehand what his *nature* and *diſpoſition* is, that ſo you may *accommodate* your ſelf thereunto, and *compoſe* your actions and behaviour accordingly; that you may *furniſh* him with *freſh* pleaſures if he be *ſoft* and *voluptuous*, or blow him up with *flatteries*, if he be *proud* and *vainglorious*; that if he be *covetous* and *tyrannical*, you may *ſpunge* and *oppreſs* his people and *drein* their *wealth* into his Coffers; if *juſt* and *beneficent*, you may *aſſiſt* and *forward* him in *righting* the injuries, *correcting* the miſcarriages, and *alleviating* the burthens of his Subjects. And thus if you would *ſerve* the great King of the World in ſuch ways as are *pleaſing* and *acceptable* to him, you muſt *ſtudy* his *Nature*, and endeavour to *enform* your ſelves which way his infinite perfections do *incline* him, that ſo you may know how to *comport* your ſelves towards him and to *render* him ſuch Services as are *agreeable* to his Nature. For there is no *rule* in the World but onely that of his *Nature*, by which you can *certainly* conclude what will *pleaſe* him; and though he hath told you by expreſs *Revelation* what *ſervices* he *expects* and what

will *pleaſe* him, yet without recurring to the *rule* of his *Nature*, you can never be *ſecure* either that what he told you is *true*, or that what he told you was pleaſing to him *then*, is ſtill pleaſing to him *now*. For how can you be ſecure either that he told you *truly* what Services were *pleaſing* to him, but only from the *truth* and *veracity* of his Nature, or that the Services which were pleaſing to him *then*, are pleaſing to him *now*, but from the *ſtability* and *unchangeableneſs* of his Nature. So that in our *enquiries* after what is *pleaſing* to God, we cannot depend upon his *Word* without conſulting his *Nature*, which is not only the *Security* but alſo the *Teſt* of his Word. For it's certain that *that* cannot be God's *Word* which *contradicts* his *Nature*, and what *plauſible* pretence ſoever any Doctrine may make to *divine Revelation*, if it *teach* or *command* any thing that is apparently *repugnant* to the *divine Perfections*, we ought for that reaſon to conclude it an *Impoſture*; it being much *more* poſſible that the moſt *plauſible* pretence to *Revelation* ſhould be *falſe*, than that God ſhould *reveal* any Doctrine that is *repugnant* to his *Nature*. So that in all our Enquiries what is *pleaſing* to God, our *laſt appeal* muſt be to his *Nature*, which

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is the great *Standard* of *Good* and *Evil*, by which we are to *measure* what is *pleasing* and *displeasing* to him.

WHILST therefore we are *ignorant* of God's Nature, or possessed with *wrong* and *false* apprehensions of it, we must necessarily *wander* in the *dark*, and neither know *what* to *do* nor *how* to *behave* our selves towards him. For how can we *imagine* what will *please* or *displease* a *dark* and *unknown* Nature, whose *bent* and *inclinations* we are utterly *unacquainted* with; but if we are under *false* apprehensions of his Nature, *they* must necessarily *mislead* us in our *behaviour* towards him, and put us upon *false* ways of *serving* and *pleasing* him. Thus if we apprehend him to be a *froward* and *testy* Being, that is apt to be *pleased* and *displeased* with *Trifles*, in *conformity* to our apprehension of his Nature, we shall offer him a *trifling* Service, a Service made up of *Pageantry* and *Complement*, of *pompous* shew and *ceremonious* respects and *empty* formalities; For such a *trifling* Worship is in it self most *proper* for such a *humorous* Divinity. So if we apprehend him to be of an *imperious* and *tyrannical* nature, that governs *himself* and the *World* by a *blind* and *obstinate* Will, without any regard to the *eternal reasons* of

things, we ſhall worſhip him as the *Indians* do their *arbitrary* Devils, *i. e.* follow him with *houlings* and *lamentations*, with *trembling* hearts and *frighted* looks, and *diſmal* tones, and by *flattering* him with *praiſes* and *fauning* upon him with *ſlaviſh* ſubmiſſions and addreſſes endeavour to *collogue* with Heaven, and *ingratiate* our ſelves with its *dreadful* Majeſty; for what can be more *agreeable* to ſuch a *tyrannical* Divinity than ſuch a *forc'd* and *ſlaviſh* Worſhip? In a word, if we apprehend him to be a *fond* and *indulgent* Being, that is governed by a *fooliſh* pity and *blind* commiſeration, we ſhall not fail to render him a *ſutable* Worſhip, *i. e.* to *retire* and grow *melancholly*, to *whine* and *bemoan* our ſelves; to *deject* our looks and *diſfigure* our countenances, and *teaze* our Souls into fits of *fruitleſs* compunction, that ſo by the *ſoft* Rhetorick of a *well-acted* ſorrow we may *pierce* his bowels and *melt* him into *pity* and *compaſſion* towards us; for what can be more *prevalent* with ſuch a *ſoft* and *indulgent* Deity, than ſuch a *mournful* and *paſſionate* Religion? Thus whilſt we have *wrongful* apprehenſions of God, they muſt neceſſarily *miſlead* us into *falſe* ways of Worſhip, becauſe we can no otherwiſe worſhip him than by *rendering* him

him *ſuch* Services as are *ſutable* to the apprehenſions we have of his *Nature*; and therefore while we think any *otherwiſe* of his Nature than *it is*, we muſt neceſſarily think ſuch Services *ſutable* to it as *are not*.

But if we *truly* underſtand what God *is*, we cannot but apprehend what Worſhip is *ſutable* to him, by that Eternal *congruity* and *proportion* that there is between *things* and *things*; which is as obvious to mens *minds*, as ſounds and colours to their *ears* and *eyes*. If God be a Being endowed with *ſuch* and *ſuch* Perfections, every Mans mind will tell him that between ſuch an *Object* and ſuch *actions* and *affections* there is a *natural* congruity, and therefore *ſo* and *ſo* he ought to be *treated* and *addreſs'd to*, with *ſuch* and *ſuch* actions and affections to be *ſerved* and *worſhip'd*. So that if we apprehend God *truly* as he *is*, circled with all his natural *glories* and *perfections*, our *apprehenſions* will produce in us ſuch *affections*, and our affections ſuch *deportment* and *behaviour* towards him as are *ſutable* to the perfections of his Nature, and we ſhall worſhip him with *ſuch* Services as will both *pleaſe* and *become* him; with *admiring* thoughts and *dutiful* wills and *God-*

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like affections; with an *ingenuous* fear, a *humble* confidence and an *obedient* love; with *chearful* Praiſes and *profound* Adorations, with *ſober*, *wiſe* and *rational* Devotions; ſuch as will *wing* and *employ* our *beſt* affections and moſt *noble* faculties; For 'tis ſuch a *Worſhip* only that can *ſute* ſuch *Perfections* and *pleaſe* ſuch a *Nature* as Gods.

II. A *right apprehenſion* of God is alſo neceſſary to *inſpire* us with the beſt *Principle* of ſerving him. For it's certain that there is no Principle in humane Nature that will ſo *effectually* engage us to the *ſervice* of God, or render our *ſervice* ſo *acceptable* to him, as that of *Love*; which will tune *our* wills into ſuch an Harmony with *Gods*, that we ſhall no longer *chuſe* and *refuſe* according to our particular *likings* and *diſlikings*, but what is moſt *pleaſing* or *diſpleaſing* to *him* will be ſo to *us*; and *our* wills being thus *united* and *ſubjected* to *his*, our obedience will extend to *all* his Commands, and admit no other *bounds* but his *Will* and *Pleaſure*. Whereas if we do not obey him out of *love*, we ſhall indeavour to *contract* our obedience into as *narrow* a compaſs as may be, becauſe we ſhall render it to him with a *grudging* mind, and conſequently with a

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narrow and *ſtingy* hand; for we ſhall ſerve him no farther than we are *driven* by *fear* and the *reſtleſs* importunities of a *clamorous* conſcience, and ſo conſequently fall *infinitely* ſhort of our duty, and take up in a *partial* and *hypocritical* obedience. For while we do not *love* him, it is impoſſible we ſhould *obey* him with a *ready* will, which is the proper *ſeat* of his *Empire*; and while we obey him with a *ſtubborn* and *rebellious* will, we are only his *ſlaves*, but the Devils *ſubjects*. 'Till therefore we do *obey* him, at leaſt in ſome meaſure, from a Principle of *love*, it is impoſſible our obedience ſhould be either *univerſal* or *ſincere*.

But to the *inſpiring* our Souls with this *Principle*, there is nothing more neceſſary than *right apprehenſions* of God, who in himſelf is doubtleſs the moſt *amiable* of beings, as having all thoſe Perfections in *infinite* degrees that can *beget* or *deſerve* a rational affection. So that we cannot think him to be any way *otherwiſe* than he *is*, without thinking him *leſs* lovely, and *detracting* more or leſs from the infinite *beauty* of his Nature; For ſince he cannot be *more* lovely than he is *in himſelf*, every *falſe* apprehenſion of him muſt needs repreſent him *leſs* lovely.

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But ſince of all his Perfections that of his *Goodneſs* is the moſt *powerful* motive and ingagement of *Love*, there is nothing more neceſſary to *kindle* our love to him than *right apprehenſions* thereof. For being *infinitely* good, as he is, in his own Nature, it is impoſſible we ſhould conceive him to be *better* than he is; and therefore every *falſe* notion we entertain of his *goodneſs* muſt neceſſarily *detract* from it, and ſo much as we detract from his *goodneſs*, ſo much we detract from the *principal* reaſon and motive of our loving him. And therefore in order to the ingaging of our *love* to him, it concerns us above all things not to entertain any *Opinion* of him that reflects a *diſparagement* on his *goodneſs*. For too many ſuch Opinions there are that have been *imbibed* among Chriſtians as the *fundamental* Principles of their *Orthodoxy*; namely ſuch as theſe, that Gods *Sovereign Will* is the ſole *rule* of his *actions*, and that he doth things not becauſe they are *juſt* and *reaſonable*, but that they are juſt and reaſonable becauſe he *doth* 'em; as if he were merely an *Omnipotent*, *blind* Will that acts without *Reaſon*, and did run through the World like an *irreſiſtible* Whirlwind, *hurrying* all things before him without any conſideration of *right* or *wrong*;

wrong; That his Decrees of *Governing* and *diſpoſing* his creatures are wholly founded in his *abſolute* and *irreſiſtible* Will, that determins of the everlaſting fate of Souls without any *reaſon*, or *foreſight*, or *condition*; that by this his *unaccountable* Will he hath *impaled* the far *greater* part of *'em* within an *abſolute* Decree of *Reprobation*, for no other end but that *Nimrod-like* he might have game enough to *ſport* and *breath* his *vengeance* for ever; and that having *nailed* 'em to this *woful* croſs by this his *dire* Decree, he bids 'em *ſave themſelves* and *come down*, as thoſe cruel Mockers did our Saviour, and becauſe they do not *obey*, *torments* and *cruciates* 'em for ever, though he knows they are not *able* to do it *of themſelves*, and hath *purpoſed* never to *enable* 'em to do it. Which Opinions do repreſent God in ſuch a *formidable* dreſs, circled with ſuch a *ſtern* and *gaſtly* Majeſty, as is more apt to inſpire us with *horror* than *love*. For though by *perſuading* our ſelves that *we* are of the ſmall number of his *elected* Favourites, we may work our minds into *ſome* degree of love to him; yet when we conſider how *ſeverely* he hath treated the *reſt* of our fellow Creatures, without any other *reaſon* but his own *Will*, this will intermingle ſuch a

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grimneſs with his ſmiles, ſuch a *terrour* with thoſe Charms for which we love him, as muſt neceſſarily *damp* the fervours of our love, and ever and anon *freez* it into *horror* and *aſtoniſhment*, and ſo *fear* will be at leaſt the *predominant* Principle of our *Obedience*; and while it *is* ſo, our Religion muſt needs *languiſh* under great *imperfections* and *infirmities*. For while our *fear* and *dread* of God is the *governing* Principle of our Religion, we ſhall but do *penance* in all our *addreſſes* to him, and every act of our *Obedience* will be a kind of *Martyrdom*, ſo that we ſhall never be able to entertain any *chearful* converſe or *friendly* Society with him, and yet ſerve him we *muſt*, for fear our *neglect* of him ſhould rouſe his *Vengeance* againſt us; and between this *neceſſity* of coming to him, and this *fearfulneſs* of approaching him, what can there be begotten but a *forced* and *conſtrain'd* Devotion, which becauſe we do not *love* we would willingly *leave*, did not our *dread* and *horror* of him *drag* us to his Altars. And as we ſhall *ſerve* him with a *forc'd* Obedience, ſo we ſhall *obey* him with a *ſordid* and *nigardly* affection; and while we *grudg* him our Obedience, we ſhall be moſt *backward* to obey him in thoſe inſtances of Duty that are of *greateſt*

eſt moment and *moſt* pleaſing to *him*, and moſt *forward* in thoſe that are of *leaſt* concern and moſt pleaſing to *our ſelves*. Thus while our minds are ridden with *ſour* and *rigid* apprehenſions of God, *they* will inſpire us with a *ſlaviſh* dread of him, and *that* will *reſtrain* and *contract* our Obedience to him. Thus *Maximus Tyrius* excellently repreſents the caſe, ὁ μὲν εὐσεβὴς φίλος θεῷ, ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων κόλαξ θεοῦ. Ὁ μακάριος ὁ εὐσεβὴς ὁ φίλος θεοῦ, δυσ-τυχὴς δὲ ὁ δεισιδαίμων: ὁ μὲν θαρσῶν τῇ ἀρετῇ πρόσεισι τοῖς θεοῖς ἄνευ δέους· ὁ δὲ πτοηθεὶς διὰ μοχθηρίαν, μετὰ πολλοῦ δέους, δύσελπις, καὶ δεδιὼς τοὺς θεοὺς ὥσπερ τοὺς τυράννους, *i. e.* the truly religious Man is the friend of God, but the ſuperſtitious is his flatterer, and the former is happy but the latter miſerable; for the one being encouraged by his own Vertue, approaches God without any ſlaviſh fear and dread, but the other being debaſed with the ſenſe of his own wickedneſs approaches him with trembling and deſpair, dreading him as a cruel Tyrant, *Diſſert.* 4.

If therefore we would render him a *chearful*, *free*, and *univerſal* Obedience, we muſt endeavour to repreſent him *fairly* to our own minds, and to think of him as he *is*, and as he hath repreſented *himſelf* in the

the holy Scriptures, *i. e.* as a *bountiful* benefactor to all his Creation, and an *universal* lover of the Souls of men; that would have *all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth,* and doth *heartily* and *readily* contribute to our eternal *welfare*; that leaves no *art* of love, no *method* of kindness *unattempted* to rescue us from eternal *perdition*, and when we have utterly *baffled* and *defeated* them all, doth most *unwillingly* abandon us to the *woful* fate we have *chosen* and *prepared* for our selves; that in *punishing* even the most *incorrigible* sinners doth not at all design to *wreak* and *gratifie* his own revenge, but to *do good* to the World, and *warn* others by their *sufferings* not to imitate their *sins*; And in a word, that importunately *invites* us *back* when we are *gone astray*, and upon our *return* graciously *receives* us, and when he hath received us is infinitely industrious to *prepare* us for happiness, and when he hath prepared us abundantly *rewards* us, and when he hath rewarded us everlastingly *triumphs* in our Glory and beatitude; these and such like thoughts are truly *worthy* of God, and *befitting* the infinite goodness of his Nature, and as *such* do earnestly *recommend* him to our *affections*, as the most *amiable* and

and *indearing* object in the World; and when by such recommendation they have *captivated* our affections, and *kindled* our hearts into an *unfained* love of him, they have inspired us with such a *vigorous* Principle of action, as will both *animate* and *innoble* our Religion, and render it truly *worthy* of God and our selves; For then we shall serve him with a *free* and *dutiful* will, a *liberal* affection, and a *chearful* heart, and consequently render him a *full*, and *generous*, and *willing* obedience. For so holy *David* tells us, *Psal.* 119.32. *I will run the ways of thy Commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart, i. e.* when thou shalt *open* and *widen* my heart with the love of thee (for so St. *Paul* expounds the Phrase, 2 *Cor.* 6. 11.) I shall most *readily* and *chearfully* obey thee.

III. A *right apprehension* of God is also necessary to *direct* us to the *end* for which we are to *serve* him; without which it is impossible we should serve him *acceptably*. For as a *good* intention doth not *justifie* a *bad* action, so neither doth a good *action* a bad *intention*, and unless *both* are good, neither are acceptable. If I do an action that is *materially* good with respect to a *bad* end, I *unhallow* and *vitiate* it, and render it *formally* evil. If I fast for *strife*,

or give Alms for *vain-glory*, or pray to give a colour to my *Rapines* and *Oppreſſions*; my very Devotion is a *cheat*, my Mortification a *lie*, and my Charity an *impoſture*. So that in order to our ſerving of God *acceptably*, it's neceſſary we ſhould *direct* thoſe ſervices we render him to their *right* and *proper* end; and what *that* is we cannot well underſtand unleſs we have a *right apprehenſion* of his nature; for to be ſure God hath propoſed *that* to us for the *end* of our Worſhip, which is moſt *agreeable* to his own perfection, and therefore unleſs we have a *right* Notion of his perfections, how can we rightly apprehend what *end* is moſt *agreeable* to them? As for inſtance, the right *end* of our *ſerving* him, is that we may *glorifie* him for ever in an everlaſting *participation* of his *perfection* and *happineſs*; and this we can be no otherwiſe *certain* of, than by a *true* ſurvey and inſpection of his *nature*, which will inſtruct us that being infinitely *perfect* as he is, he muſt be infinitely *happy* within himſelf, and ſo can deſign no *ſelf-end* without himſelf, and conſequently that the end for which he requires our ſervice is not any *advantage* he expects to reap from it, or further *addition* to his own happineſs, he being from all Eternity *paſt* as compleatly happy

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as he can be to all Eternity *to come*; and therefore what *other* end can he be ſuppoſed to aim at than *our* good and happineſs? It is true indeed, he deſigns to glorifie *himſelf* in *our* happineſs; but how? Not to render himſelf himſelf *more* glorious by it than he is *in himſelf*, for that is impoſſible; but to *diſplay* and *ſhew forth* his own eſſential glory to all that are capable of *admiring* and *imitating* him, that thereby he might *invite* them to *tranſcribe* that *goodneſs* of his into their natures, of which his glory is the *ſhine* and *luſtre*, and thereby to glorifie *themſelves*; and what can more effectually diſplay the glory of a Being who is infinitely *wiſe* and *powerful* and *good*, than to *contrive* and *effect* the happineſs of his *Creatures*, and eſpecially of his *rational* Creatures, who of all others have the moſt *ample* capacity of happineſs? Doubtleſs, the *higheſt* glory of an infinite *power*, that is conducted by an infinite *wiſdom* and *goodneſs*, is to *contrive* and *execute* the moſt effectual methods of doing the *greateſt* good; and what *greater* good can ſuch a power *effect*, than the *eternal* happineſs of *reaſonable* Creatures? So that *Gods* glory and *our* happineſs are ſo *inſeparably* conjoyned, that we cannot aim right at *either*, but we muſt hit *both*

and whether we ſay that his *end* is his *own* glory or *our* happineſs, it is the ſame thing; for his glory *is* our happineſs, and our happineſs *is* his glory, and when he hath *perfected* our Nature, and *advanced* it to the higheſt happineſs it is *capable* of, it will *ſhine back* upon him, even as all other glorious *effects* do on their *cauſes*, and *reflect* everlaſting *honour* on that infinite *Power* and *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* from whence it was *derived*. Thus *right apprehenſions* of the nature of God will *naturally* lead us to the great end which *he* propoſes in all his tranſactions with *us*, and thereby *direct* us what end *we* are to propoſe in our tranſactions with *him*. For that which is *Gods* end ought to be *ours*, and therefore ſince *his* end is *his own* Glory, or, which is the ſame thing, *our* everlaſting Happineſs, it ought to be *ours* alſo.

But now while we *miſapprehend* the nature of God we ſhall be apt to ſet up *falſe* and *indirect* ends of ſerving him; as for inſtance, whilſt we look upon him as a *ſelfiſh* being, that *centers* wholly in himſelf, and *ſeparates* his intereſt from the intereſt of his *Creatures*, doing every thing meerly for his *own ſake*, we ſhall think our ſelves obliged in all our addreſſes

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to him to ſet aſide *our own* intereſt and happineſs, and to aim *ſingly* and *ſeparately* at *his* honour and glory; and yet this is the great *Fundamental* of the whole *Scheme* of ſome mens Divinity, *viz.* That God aims wholly at *himſelf*, and regards the good of his Creatures no farther than it ſerves *his own* intereſt; that he made this World out of mere *oſtentation*, to *boaſt* and *magnifie* his own *power* and *greatneſs*; and gives *Laws* to his Creatures, and exacts their *obedience* for no other reaſon but becauſe 'tis for his *honour* to be *ſerved* and *worſhipped*; that he created *Hell* only to ſhew the *power* of his *wrath*, and prepare an everlaſting *Triumph* for his *vengeance*; and erected *Heaven* for a *Theater* to ſhew himſelf on, that ſo having filled it with a vaſt *Corona* of *Angelical* and *Saintly* ſpectators, he might *diſplay* the *glory* of his *Majeſty* before them, and thereby provoke them to *extol* and *praiſe* and *commend* him for ever. And while we *thus* conceive of God, how can we hope that he will ever be *pleaſed* with us unleſs *we* aim at the ſame end that *he* doth, *i. e.* unleſs laying aſide all regard to *our ſelves* and *our own* happineſs both *here* and *hereafter*, we *intirely* direct all our *worſhip* and *ſervice* to *his* glory and intereſt; which being impoſſible

for us to do, whilſt we have ſo much *ſelf-love* and ſo much *indigence* together, will either render our Religion wholly *unpracticable*, or perplex us with eternal doubts of its *truth* and *ſincerity*.

And ſuppoſing we *could* direct *all* our Religion to *this* end, this inſtead of rendering it more *acceptable* to God would only render it more *unworthy* of him; for then we ſhould ſerve him under the notion of his *Benefactors* rather than of his *Penſioners*, with a deſign to *enrich* him rather than to *be enriched* by him: And what an *unbeſeeming* preſumption is it for ſuch *indigent* Creatures as we, to entertain the leaſt thought of *contributing* to God, or making any *addition* to his *infinite* ſtore? He is above all *want*, being infinitely *ſatisfied* from the *inexhauſtible* fountain of *his own* perfections; and for us to imagine that he *needs* our Services, and *requires* them to ſerve his own *intereſt*, is to *blaſpheme* his *Alſufficiency*, and ſuppoſe him a *poor* and *indigent* being, that for want of a *perfect* ſatisfaction *within himſelf*, is forced to *rome* abroad and raiſe *taxes* upon his Creatures to *enrich* and *ſupply* himſelf. For if we ſerve him for *any* end at all, it muſt be either to do *him* good or *our ſelves*; if it be to do *him* good, we *reproach*

and

and *diſhonour* him by ſuppoſing that he hath *need* of us and our ſervices, which can do him no *good* unleſs he hath *ſome* need of them. So that whatſoever ſome *high-flown* Enthuſiaſts may pretend, that it is *ſordid* and *mercenary* to ſerve God for *our own* good, I am ſure to ſerve him for *his* good is *prophane* and *blaſphemous*; and therefore either we muſt ſerve him for *no* good, or ſerve him for *our own*; and ſince he is ſo infinitely *ſufficient* to himſelf, that nothing we can do can *benefit* and *advantage* him, to what better purpoſe can we *worſhip* and *ſerve* him, than to *receive* benefit and advantage from him; which inſtead of being *baſe* and *mercenary*, is a purpoſe moſt *becoming* both *God* and *our ſelves*? For to ſerve him with an *intent* not to *give* to, but to *receive* from him, is to acknowledg his *fulneſs* and our own *want*, his *Alſufficiency* and our own *Poverty*; whereas by ſerving him to the *contrary* purpoſe, we do in effect ſet up our ſelves *above* him, it being much *greater* to give than it is to receive; and to make *that* the *end* of our worſhipping God, which doth in effect ſuppoſe him to be our *inferiour*, is to make our ſelves *Gods* inſtead of *Votaries*. What the *true* end therefore is of our *ſerving* God, may

be eaſily inferred from a *right apprehenſion* of his nature. For do but conſider him as a Being that is *above* all want, that is *infinitely* ſatisfied in *his own* perfections, and an *unbounded* Ocean of happineſs to *himſelf*, and then what *other* end can you propoſe in *ſerving* him, but to *derive* perfection and happineſs from him, in the *accompliſhment* of which *he* and *you* will be *Glorified* together?

IV. And laſtly, A *right apprehenſion* of God is alſo neceſſary to furniſh us with proper *motives* and *incouragements* to ſerve him. It is the nature of all reaſonable Beings to be *drawn forth* into action by *Motives* and *Arguments*; and the moſt *powerful* Arguments to move us *Godward*, are drawn from the *nature* of God, from his *Majeſty* and *Holineſs*, his *Truth* and *Juſtice*, his *Mercy* and *Goodneſs*; none of which can have their *juſt* and *full* influence upon us, unleſs we have a *right* and *genuine* apprehenſion of them. The conſideration of his *Majeſty* is naturally apt to *ſtrike* our minds into an *awful* reverence of his *Authority*; but if we look upon it under the notion of a *mere Arbitrary* greatneſs, that Governs not it ſelf by *Counſel* and *Reaſon*, but by a *blind*, and *abſolute*, and *unaccountable* Will,

Will, that always chuſes and refuſes *pro imperio*, without any regard to the *eternal reaſons* of things, we may be *aſtoniſh'd* and *confounded* at it, but we can never *truly* reverence it. The conſideration of his *Holineſs* is naturally apt to *deter* us from approaching him with *vicious* and *impure* affections; but if we place his holineſs in a *mere formal* affectation of external *decency*, *reſpect*, and *reverence*, and not in the *immutable* conformity of his Will with the *eternal* Rules of *Righteouſneſs*, it may move us to be very *ceremonious* and *reſpectful* to him, as to the *Place*, and *Garb*, and *Poſture* of our Worſhip, but it will never prevail with us to *cleanſe* and *rectifie* our hearts and affections. Again, the conſideration of his *Juſtice* is naturally apt to *reſtrain* us from *affronting* his Authority by *perverſe* and *wilful* violations of his *Laws*; but while we look upon it as a *ſtern* and *implacable* Attribute, which nothing will *appeaſe* and *ſatisfie* but *bloud* and *revenge*, it may overwhelm us with *horrour* and *deſpair*, but 'twill never perſuade us to *reform* and *amend*. Once more, the conſideration of his *Mercy* is naturally apt when we are gone aſtray to *invite* us to return, with the *hopeful* proſpect it gives us of *pardon* and *reconciliation*; but while we

we look upon it under the notion of a *blind* pity, or *effeminate* easineſs and tenderneſs of Nature, that will admit of no *ſeverity* how *wholſom* ſoever or *neceſſary* to the ends of Government, inſtead of *moving* us to repentance, it will *animate* us in our rebellion. In fine, the conſideration of his *Goodneſs* is naturally apt to *work* upon our *Ingenuity*, and to draw us Godwards with *the cords of a man, and the bonds of love*; but while we miſtake it for a *blind* Partiality, that *chuſes* its Favourites without *reaſon*, and *rewards* them without *reſpect* to their Qualifications, inſtead of *captivating* our *love*, 'twill *provoke* our *diſdain*, and *excite* in us a ſecret *contempt* and *averſation*.

Thus though the nature of God be in *it ſelf* a moſt *fruitful* Topick of *Motives* and *Arguments* to ingage us to *ſerve* and *obey* him, yet by the *falſe* repreſentations that are ſometimes made of it, it may be *perverted* into an *inducement* to wickedneſs, and made a *plauſible* pretence to *encourage* and *juſtifie* us in our rebellions againſt him. Whilſt we look upon God as he is *in himſelf*, ſhining with his own *unſtained* and *immaculate* Glories, there is nothing more apt to *influence* all the *ſprings* of *motion* within us;

to

to *enflame* our love, *encourage* our hope, and *alarm* our fear, and by *theſe* to ſet the *Wheels* of our Obedience agoing. For there is nothing in humane nature that is capable of being *moved* and *affected* by *Reaſon*, which hath not an *anſwerable* reaſon in the nature of God to *move* and *affect* it. And as in him there are all the *reaſons* that can *affect* us, ſo there is all the *force* and *efficacy* of thoſe reaſons, every thing in him being *perfect* and *infinite*; in him there is an infinite *beauty* to attract our *love*, an infinite *good* to inflame our *deſire*, an infinite *kindneſs* to affect our *ingenuity*, an infinite *Juſtice* armed with an infinite *power* to awaken our *fear*, an infinite *mercy* to invite our *hope*, and an infinite *truth* to confirm and ſupport it. So that 'tis beyond the power of all humane imagination to *frame* or *fancy* an Object that is ſo every way *fitted* to *affect* humane nature, and *influence* all its Principles of action, as God *in himſelf* is. Whilſt therefore we apprehend him *truly*, and as he is in *himſelf*, the conſideration of him muſt needs be of *wonderful* force to *oblige* us to *ſerve* and *obey* him, and there is not *one* of all thoſe *glorious* perfections in which his Nature is *arrayed*, but will ſuggeſt to us ſome *powerful* perſuaſive

perſuaſive to *Piety* and *Vertue*, and either by our *hope* or our *fear*, our *love* or our *gratitude*, incline our hearts to keep his Commandments. So that if we are *ignorant* of his perfections, or do entertain *falſe* Notions concerning them, we ſhall either *want* thoſe Motives to Piety which they naturally *ſuggeſt*, or draw Arguments from them to *encourage* and *juſtifie* us in our rebellions againſt him. And thus you ſee in all theſe inſtances how indiſpenſably neceſſary *right* Notions of God are to ingage us to *ſerve* and *obey* him.

SECT. II.

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Rules *for the forming* right Apprehensions *of God.*

Dionysius the *Areopagite*, and from him all the *Schoolmen*, assign three ways by which we are to frame our apprehensions of the Nature of God, viz. *Viam Causalitatis, viam Eminentiæ, & viam Remotionis, i.e.* the way of *Causality*, the way of *Eminency*, and the way of *Remotion*. The first consists in *arguing* from those perfections which God hath *caused* and *produced* in his Creatures to the perfections of his *Nature*. For whatsoever *degrees* of perfection there are in the *Creature*, they must either be *uncreated*, which is a contradiction, or *flow* from the Creator as from the immense *Ocean* of all perfection; but 'tis impossible they should flow *from* him, unless they were first *in* him. So that when we behold *such* and *such* perfections in the Creature, we may from them most certainly *infer* that the same are *all* in God, who is the *cause* and *fountain* of them; and though the divine Nature abounds with *innumerable* vertues and perfecti-

perfections, yet 'tis impoſſible for us by our own *natural* light to *diſcover* any other of them than thoſe of which he himſelf hath *imprinted* ſome *ſpecimens* upon created Beings; theſe being the only *Scales* by which our underſtanding can *aſcend* to the *reach* and *view* of the divine perfections. But becauſe all *created* perfections are not only *ſhort* in their *degrees*, but alſo intermingled with *defects* in their very *kind* and *nature*; therefore in attributing them to *God* we ought carefully to *abſtract* from them whatever is *defective* whether it be in *kind* or in *degree*. For God is the cauſe of *perfection* only, but not of *defect*, which ſo far forth as it is *natural* to *created* Beings hath *no cauſe* at all, but is merely a *negation* or *non-entity*. For every *created* thing was a *negation* or *non-entity* before ever it had a *poſitive* being, and it had only *ſo much* of its *primitive* negation *taken away* from it, as it had *poſitive* being *conferred* on it; and therefore ſo far forth as it *is*, its *being* is to be attributed to that *ſoveraign cauſe* that produced it, but ſo far forth as it is *not*, its *not being* is to be attributed to that *Original Non-entity* out of which it was produced. For that which was *once* nothing would *ſtill* have been nothing had it not been for the *cauſe* that

that gave *being* to it; and therefore that it is *ſo far* nothing ſtill, *i. e. limited* and *defective*, is only to be attributed to its own *primitive* nothingneſs. As for inſtance, if I give a poor man an hundred pounds; that he is worth ſo *much* money is wholly owing to *me*, but that he is not worth a hundred *more* is owing only to his own *poverty*; and juſt ſo, that I have ſuch and ſuch *perfections* of being is wholly owing to *God* who produced me out of nothing, but that I have ſuch and ſuch *defects* of being is only owing to that *Non-entity* out of which he produced me; and therefore ſince our *perfections* are derived from *God*, but not our *defects*, 'tis altogether as *unreaſonable* to attribute the *latter* to to him, as it is *reaſonable* to attribute the *former*.

Now the *defects* of created perfection which we are to *remove* and *abſtract* from God in our conceptions of him, are of two ſorts: Firſt of *the thing*; Secondly, of the *mode of thing*. The defect of *the thing* is when the thing *it ſelf* is ſuch as that it wholly excludes ſomething much *better* and more perfect; thus *matter* for inſtance is defective in the thing, becauſe it excludes *ſpiritual* and *immaterial* ſubſtance, which is much more *excellent* than it ſelf. The defect of the

mode

mode of the thing is when the thing is ſo excellent in *it ſelf* as that it excludes nothing better, but yet is deficient in *degrees* of perfection. As for inſtance, *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, *Reaſon* and *Underſtanding* are things ſo excellent *in themſelves* as that they exclude nothing that is more excellent, but yet as reſiding in *created* Beings want a great many *poſſible degrees* of perfection. Now both theſe defects being *natural* are *uncauſed*, and ſo cannot proceed from the Author of Nature, and not proceeding *from* him, they cannot be ſuppoſed to be *in* him, and therefore in our conceptions *of* him ought not to be attributed *to* him. In reſpect therefore of theſe *twofold* defects in created perfections, it is neceſſary we ſhould conceive of God in the way of *Remotion* and *Eminence* as well as of *Cauſality*; otherwiſe we ſhall *injuriouſly* attribute to him the *Defects* of his Creatures, of which he is *not* the cauſe, as well as their *perfections* of which he *is*. If therefore we would *do* God *right* in our thoughts and conceptions of him, we muſt in the firſt place remove from him all defect *in the thing*, that is, all *matter* and *material* perfections; becauſe they are defective in their very *kind* and *nature*, as excluding ſuch ſubſtance and perfections as

as are incomparably more *excellent* than themſelves; and this is to conceive of him in the way *of Remotion*, which conſiſts in *removing* all kind of *matter* and *material* affections from our *thoughts* and *apprehenſions* of God. And then in the ſecond place we muſt abſtract from him all defect *in the mode of the thing*, *i. e.* all the defect of *degrees* in thoſe *ſpiritual* perfections of the Creature which we attribute to him, and *raiſe* and *exalt* them in our own minds to their utmoſt *height* and *eminence*; and this is to conceive of him in the way *of Eminency*, which conſiſts in aſcribing to God the *ſhort* and *limited* perfections of his Creatures *abſtracted* from all *defect* and *limitation*. Theſe *three* ways therefore are all indiſpenſably *neceſſary* to lead us to a *true* diſcovery of the Nature of God; as will yet farther appear by the following *Rules* I ſhall lay down for the forming a *right* Notion and Apprehenſion of him.

Firſt, If we would think *aright* of God, we muſt attribute all *poſſible perfection* to him.

Secondly, in *forming* our Notions of *his* Perfections we muſt take our *riſe* from the Perfections we behold in his *Creatures*.

Thirdly, In *aſcribing* to him the perfections of his Creatures we muſt *abſtract* from them every thing that is *defective* and *imperfect*.

Fourthly, In *arguing* from the perfections of the *Creature* to the perfections of *God*, we muſt diſtinguiſh between the *ſtate* and *relations* of *God* and *Creature*.

Fifthly, Though in arguing from the perfections of the Creature to the perfections of God we are not to ſubject him to the *Rules* of a *Creature*, yet we are always to ſuppoſe his *Will* and his *Power* to be in perfect *ſubjection* to the *perfections* of his *Nature*.

Sixthly, In conceiving of his Perfections we muſt always ſuppoſe them to be exactly *harmonious* and *conſiſtent* with each other.

I. To the forming a *right apprehenſion* of God it is neceſſary that we aſcribe to him all *poſſible perfection*. For he being the *firſt* and *ſupreme* cauſe from whence all the *perfections* of Being are *derived*, muſt neceſſarily include all perfection *in himſelf*, and *be* all thoſe perfections which he hath *communicated* to others; for how can he *give* that which he *hath not*? It is true indeed, *free* cauſes may give *leſs* to their effects than they have in themſelves, but it

it is impoſſible they ſhould give *more*; though they may *withhold* from their effects any *perfection* or *degree* of perfection which they *have*, they cannot *derive* to them any which they *have not*. Whatſoever therefore is a *perfection* of Being, muſt neceſſarily be *eſſential* to that *ſupreme* cauſe from whence all Being is *derived*; otherwiſe there would be *more* in his *effects* than there is *in himſelf*, and conſequently more than he could *give* or be the *cauſe of*, which is a contradiction.

AND as all thoſe perfections that are in *created* Beings muſt neceſſarily *exiſt* in the nature of God, ſo muſt all thoſe too that are *poſſible in themſelves*. For every perfection that is poſſible in it ſelf muſt be *poſſible* to *him* who is the *cauſe* of all things; but no perfection can be *poſſible* to him that is not *actually* in him, for no cauſe can produce that perfection in *another* which it hath not in *it ſelf*, and therefore if there be any perfection that is not *in* him 'tis impoſſible it ſhould ever be produced *by* him, and that which is impoſſible to *God* muſt be impoſſible in its *own nature*, that which is not an object of *omnipotent* power is not an object of *any* power, and that which is not an Object

of any power is in it ſelf *impoſſible*. Since therefore every perfection that is poſſible in *it ſelf* muſt be poſſible to *God*, and ſince no perfection that is not *in* him can be poſſible *to* him, it neceſſarily follows that all the perfections that are *poſſible* in themſelves are *actually* exiſting in the Nature of God.

II. IN *forming* our Notions of *Gods* perfections we muſt take our *riſe* from thoſe perfections which we behold in his *Creatures*. For our underſtanding being too *ſhort-ſighted* to penetrate *immediately* into the *ſubſtance* and *eſſence* of things, hath no other way to *know* and *apprehend* them, but either by their *cauſes*, or by their *effects*; but now God being the *firſt* and *ſupreme* fountain of all cauſes cannot be known by his *cauſe*, becauſe he hath *none*, and therefore is knowable only by his *effects*, that is, by the *works* of his *Creation* that lie before us, and are within the proſpect of our underſtandings; in the which all that is *excellent* and *good* is an illuſtrious *Comment* and *Paraphraſe* upon God.

NOW the *effects* of God are all reducible to theſe four generals, *Subſtance* or *Eſſence*, *Life*, *Senſe* and *Reaſon*; all which are in *man*, who is the *Epitome* of the World, and

and a compleat *Model* of all the Works of God; and therefore not only all *theſe*, but all the proper *excellencies* and *perfections* of theſe muſt be ſuppoſed to be in *God*, from whom they are *derived*.

THE firſt effect of God is *ſubſtance*. Now the proper perfections of ſubſtance are *Amplitude* and *Fulneſs* of Being. By the *Amplitude* of ſubſtance I mean its *greatneſs* or *largeneſs* as to the *diffuſion* or *extent* of it, in oppoſition to *littleneſs*, or, which is the ſame thing, to being *defined* to, or *circumſcribed* within a *ſmall* and *inconſiderable* ſpace; by the *Fulneſs* of ſubſtance, I mean its having *more* of Eſſence or Being, by which it is *more* removed from *not being*, in oppoſition to things that have but *little* being in them, that are of ſo *fleeting* and *tranſitory* a nature as that they are *next* to *nothing*. Wherefore in conceiving of God we muſt aſcribe to him theſe perfections of ſubſtance even to their *utmoſt poſſibility*, that is, we muſt conceive him to be a Being of *infinite Amplitude*, that is neither *defined* nor *circumſcribed* within any certain ſpace, but *coexiſts* with, and *penetrates* and *paſſes through* all things; and by thus conceiving of him we attribute to him *Immenſity*,

of any power is in it ſelf *impoſſible*. Since therefore every perfection that is poſſible in *it ſelf* muſt be poſſible to *God*, and ſince no perfection that is not *in* him can be poſſible *to* him, it neceſſarily follows that all the perfections that are *poſſible* in themſelves are *actually* exiſting in the Nature of God.

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and a compleat *Model* of all the Works of God; and therefore not only all *theſe*, but all the proper *excellencies* and *perfections* of theſe muſt be ſuppoſed to be in *God*, from whom they are *derived*.

THE firſt effect of God is *ſubſtance*. Now the proper perfections of ſubſtance are *Amplitude* and *Fulneſs* of Being. By the *Amplitude* of ſubſtance I mean its *greatneſs* or *largeneſs* as to the *diffuſion* or *extent* of it, in oppoſition to *littleneſs*, or, which is the ſame thing, to being *defined* to, or *circumſcribed* within a *ſmall* and *inconſiderable* ſpace; by the *Fulneſs* of ſubſtance, I mean its having *more* of Eſſence or Being, by which it is *more* removed from *not being*, in oppoſition to things that have but *little* being in them, that are of ſo *fleeting* and *tranſitory* a nature as that they are *next* to *nothing*. Wherefore in conceiving of God we muſt aſcribe to him theſe perfections of ſubſtance even to their *utmoſt poſſibility*, that is, we muſt conceive him to be a Being of *infinite Amplitude*, that is neither *defined* nor *circumſcribed* within any certain ſpace, but *coexiſts* with, and *penetrates* and *paſſes through* all things; and by thus conceiving of him we attribute to him *Immenſity*,

which conſiſts in being *unconfined* by any bounds of ſpace in the *out-ſpreading* of himſelf to all places that we can *ſee* or *imagine*, and infinitely *beyond* them. And then in conceiving of him we muſt alſo aſcribe to him *infinite Fulneſs* of Being, by which he is ſo *infinitely* removed from *not being*, as that he cannot *but* be; and by thus conceiving of him we attribute to him *neceſſary exiſtence*, which conſiſts in being out of all *Poſſibility* of *not being*.

BUT then ſecondly, another of thoſe works of God from which we are to take our riſe in conceiving of his Perfections, is *Life*. For he is the *cauſe* and *fountain* of all that life that is in the world, and therefore muſt not only have life *in himſelf*, but the *utmoſt perfection* of it alſo that is *poſſible*. Now the Perfections of life are *Activity* and *Duration*; by *Activity* I mean a vigorous *power* and *ability* to act, in oppoſition to *weakneſs* and *impotence*, which muſt needs be a *great* perfection of life, which is the *ſpring* and *principle* of Action; by *Duration* I mean a *long* continuance of life in oppoſition to that which is *ſhort* and *momentary*; for the more *laſting* the life is, the more *perfect* it is, and the *more* there is *of* it. Wherefore in conceiving of

of God we muſt aſcribe to him the *utmoſt* perfection of *life* that is *poſſible*; that is, we muſt conceive him to be *infinitely active* and *powerful*, that doth what he *pleaſes* in Heaven and on Earth, and can effect whatſoever is *poſſible* in *it ſelf*, and not *repugnant* to the *other* perfections of his Nature; and in thus conceiving of him we attribute *Omnipotence* to him, which conſiſts in an *ability* to do *every thing* that doth not *imply a contradiction* either to the nature of the *things themſelves*, or to the nature and perfections of the *doer*; and then in conceiving of him we muſt alſo aſcribe to him an *infinite duration* of life, that is, a life that is not *bounded* either by a *beginning* or an *end*, but is *from everlaſting to everlaſting*, and *coexiſts* and runs *Parallel* with all Duration *paſt*, and *preſent*, and *to come*; and by thus conceiving of him we attribute *Eternity* to him, which conſiſts in a *boundleſs* duration of life without any term of *beginning* or *end*.

But then thirdly, another of theſe effects of God from which we are to take our riſe in conceiving of the Perfections of God, is *Senſe*; by which I do not underſtand *carnal* or *material* ſenſe only, which conſiſts in *perceiving* the *ſtrokes*

and *impreſſions* of *material* Objects on our ſenſories, but ſenſe in the general, whether it be of *material* or *ſpiritual* Beings. For that *ſpiritual* Beings have as *exquiſite* a ſenſe of *ſpiritual* Objects, as *corporal* of *corporeal* ones there is no doubt to be made; becauſe otherwiſe we muſt ſuppoſe them *inſenſible* both of *pleaſure* and *pain*. Now the perfection of ſenſe is *Quickneſs* and *Sagacity* of Perception, whether it be of *painful* or of *pleaſant*, *grateful* or *ungrateful* Objects; and this is to be found not only in *Beaſts* and *Men*, but alſo in *ſeparated* ſpirits, in *Angels*, and in *God himſelf*. For though none of theſe have any *corporeal* ſenſe to *feel* and *perceive* the impreſſions of *corporeal* Objects, yet that both Angels and ſeparated Spirits have a *ſpiritual* ſenſe of *ſpiritual* impreſſions, by which they are ſubjected to *pain* and *pleaſure*, cannot be denied; and though God by the infinite perfection of his Nature is exempt from all ſenſe of *pain*, yet it cannot be ſuppoſed that he who is the *fountain* from whence all ſenſe is *derived* ſhould himſelf be *inſenſible*; and if he be not, we ought to ſuppoſe him as ſenſible of all that is truly *pleaſant* and *good* as it is poſſible to be; and where there is an *infinite good*, as there

is

is in the nature of God, it is poſſible to be *infinitely ſenſible* of it; and in thus conceiving, we attribute to him *infinite Happineſs*. For what elſe is an infinite *ſenſe* of *good* but infinite *pleaſure* and *happineſs*; and this is the happineſs of God, that he is infinitely *perfect* in himſelf, and infinitely *ſenſible* of his own perfections and therein infinitely *pleaſed* and *delighted*.

FOURTHLY and laſtly, Another of thoſe Works of God from whence we are to take our riſe in conceiving of his perfections, is *Reaſon*. For all that *light* of reaſon which ſhineth in *humane* and *Angelical* minds being *rayed* forth, and *derived* from him, he muſt be ſuppoſed not only to have reaſon *in himſelf*, but to have it in its utmoſt *poſſible perfection*. Now the perfection of reaſon conſiſts in *Knowledg* and *Wiſdom* in the *Underſtanding*, and *Rectitude* or *Righteouſneſs* in the *Will*. By *Knowledg* I mean conſidering and underſtanding things *abſolutely* as they are in their *own Natures*, in their *Powers* and *Properties*, *Differences* and *Circumſtances*; by *Wiſdom* I underſtand a through conſideration of things as they are *related* to one another under the Notion of *means* and *ends*, and of their *fitneſs* or *unfitneſs*

to

to the ends and purpoſes they are deſigned for. Wherefore in conceiving of God we muſt aſcribe to him all *poſſible* Knowledg and Wiſdom, that is, a *perfect* comprehenſion of all things that either *are*, or *have been*, or *ſhall be*, or *can be*; in ſhort, a knowledg infinitely *extenſive*, as comprehending all *knowable* Objects, and infinitely *intenſive*, as ſeeing every *ſingle* Object in all its *relations*, *dependances*, and *circumſtances* with a moſt *perfect* and *infallible* view; and in thus conceiving of him we attribute to him *Omniſcience* and *infinite Wiſdom*. By *Rectitude* or *Righteouſneſs* in the *Will*, which is the other perfection of Reaſon, I mean a *conformity* of the *Will*, and conſequently of the *affections* and *actions*, to all that right reaſon *dictates* and *preſcribes*; For the proper *office* of reaſon is to *conduct* the Will, and and to give *bounds* and *meaſures* to our principles of action; and in *following* right reaſon, and *chuſing* and *refuſing* by its eternal *preſcriptions*, conſiſts the *Rectitude* of the *Will*, and in that all *Moral* perfection. In conceiving of God therefore we muſt attribute to him all thoſe *moral perfections* which conſiſt in the *intire* compliance of his *Will* with the Dictates of his *infallible Reaſon*, in *chuſing* every thing which right reaſon

reaſon *approves*, and *refuſing* every thing which it *diſallows*, and this with the moſt perfect *freedom* and *exactneſs*; and in thus conceiving of him we attribute to him infinite *Goodneſs*, infinite *Juſtice*, and infinite *Truth*. For as for the firſt, *viz*, infinite *Goodneſs*, which conſiſts in the *invariable* inclination of his Will to do good *to*, and procure the happineſs *of* his Creatures, by which he is infinitely removed from *Envy* and *Malice*, right reaſon dictates to him that being infinitely happy *in himſelf*, the *beſt* and moſt *becoming* thing he can do is to *propagate* his own *likeneſs* and *reſemblance* by doing good to, and procuring the happineſs of *others*; and that *Envy* and *Malice*, which are the properties of *poor* and *indigent* Beings, are infinitely *unbeſeeming* him who is a *ſelf-ſufficient* nature; and accordingly his *Will* which always follows his *Reaſon* is infinitely *propenſe* to the *one*, and *averſe* to the *other*. And as for the ſecond, which is infinite *Juſtice*, which conſiſts in dealing with his Creatures according to their ſeveral *deſerts*, by which he is infinitely removed from all *partiality* and *injuſtice*, right reaſon dictates to him, that ſince there is an *immutable* good and evil in the actions of *free* and *reaſonable* Agents, it is

fit

fit that those who *do* good should *receive* good from him, who is the supreme *Judge* and *Moderator*, and those who *do* evil, evil, in *proportion* to the good and evil of their doings; and that to *reward* evil actions, and to *punish* good ones, or to reward those that are *less* good *beyond* those that are *more*, or punish those that are *more* evil *beneath* those that are *less*, is to go *cross* to the natures and reasons of things; and by these Dictates of *Reason* his *Will* is *invariably* regulated in all its transactions with his Creatures. Lastly, as for infinite *Truth*, which consists in a perfect *agreement* of his *declarations* with his *intentions*, especially in matters of *Promise*, whereby he is infinitely removed from all *deceit* and *falshood*, right reason dictates to him, that to speak *truth* is the only natural *end* of *speaking*, that to *promise* is to *give* a *right*, and to *intend* to perform *strict justice*; that on the contrary *lying* perverts the use of *Speech*, and betrays a *baseness* and *meanness* of spirit, that to *deceive* is to *injure*, and to *falsifie* promise is to *commit* a Robbery; and accordingly his *Will* which is ever guided by his *reason*, *imbraces* truth, and *rejects* falshood with infinite *abhorrence*.

AND

AND thus from the various *perfections* of Gods *Works* which are *before us*, we may fairly argue to all the perfections of *God himſelf*. For whatſoever perfection he hath *given*, he muſt *have*, and whatſoever perfection he *hath* he muſt have ſo far as it is *poſſible*; for if it be poſſible, it muſt be within his *power*, and if it be within his power to be ſure 'tis included in his *nature*; otherwiſe he muſt chuſe to be *leſs* perfect when it is in his power to be *more*. And by thus taking our riſe to *God* from the perfections of the *Creature*, we diſcover him to be an *immenſe ſelf-exiſting* ſubſtance, that is *omnipotent*, *eternal*, infinitely *knowing* and *wiſe*, *juſt* and *good*, *faithful* and *happy*. But to render our diſcovery yet more compleat

III. IT is neceſſary that in aſcribing to him the perfections of the Creature we *abſtract* from them every thing that is *defective* and *imperfect*. For to be ſure there is nothing can be defective or imperfect in the *Cauſe* and *Author* of all perfection. So that whereas all other Beings have ſome *defect* or other intermingled with their *perfections*, and do either *want* ſome *kind* of perfection, or ſome *degree* of thoſe kinds wherewith they are adorned, God hath all *kinds* and

and all *degrees* of all kinds of perfection; and ſo we muſt conceive of him, if we would *do* him *right* when we attribute to him the above-named perfections. As for inſtance, when we attribute to him the perfections of *ſubſtance*, we muſt *abſtract* from them the defect of *Corporeity* or *material* extenſion, which compared with *ſpirituality* is a mighty *defect* and *imperfection* of ſubſtance both as to its *Amplitude* and *Fulneſs* of Eſſence. For no *Corporeal* ſubſtance can be at the ſame *time* in the ſame *place* where *another* corporeal ſubſtance is; becauſe it conſiſts of ſuch parts as cannot *penetrate* each other; ſo that every *body* muſt be *limited* in *preſence*, becauſe it cannot be where *another* body is; whereas a *Spirit* being penetrable *it ſelf*, can penetrate or paſs through *all things*, and conſequently be preſent at the ſame *time*, and in the ſame *place* where not only other *bodies* are, but other *Spirits* too. So that by attributing *body* or *matter* to God, we muſt neceſſarily *confine* and *limit* the *Amplitude* of his ſubſtance, which if it be *bodily* muſt neceſſarily be *excluded* from all thoſe places where *other* bodily ſubſtances are, and conſequently have but a *finite* and *limited* preſence, which utterly deſtroys the

infinite

infinite *Amplitude* or *Omnipreſence* of his ſubſtance. And then *bodily* ſubſtances being all compounded of *diviſible* parts, and conſequently liable to be *divided* and *corrupted*, cannot have that *fulneſs* of Being in them which *Spirits* have, which are *ſimple* and *uncompounded* ſubſtances, and conſequently void of all *principles* of *corruption*; ſo that by attributing *body* or *matter* to God, we *ſubſtract* from the infinite *fulneſs* of his Being, and inſtead of aſcribing to him *neceſſary exiſtence*, which puts him beyond all *poſſibility* of *not being*, degrade him into a *diviſible* and *corruptible* nature. Wherefore in attributing to God the perfections of ſubſtance, we muſt *abſtract* from them all *matter* and *material* affections, and conceive of him as a moſt *pure* and *ſimple* ſpirit.

AGAIN, when we attribute to him the perfections of *life*, viz. *Power* or *Activity* and *Duration*, we muſt wholly *abſtract* from them all thoſe *imperfections* with which they are *commixt* in the Creature. As for inſtance, *activity* in the *Creature* is attended with *labour* and *pains*; the not abſtracting of which from the Activity of *God* made *Epicurus* ſuppoſe him to be a *reſtive* Being, that *withdrew* himſelf

himſelf from action for fear of *diſturbing* his own *happineſs* by it; whereas *labour* and *pains* are the *imperfections* of activity, and ſo ought not to be admitted into our conception of *God*'s, which being *infinite*, there is nothing can be *difficult* or *uneaſie* to him. For it is becauſe of *imperfection* that *labour* and *trouble* do attend any Beings in their operations; could they do what they do *perfectly*, it would be no labour *at all* to them. God therefore having an *infinite power* to effect what he pleaſes, whatſoever he *doth* he doth it moſt *perfectly*, and conſequently without any *toil* or *labour*; and ſince all things were *derived* from him, and are *dependent* upon him, they muſt all be *perfectly* ſubject to his *power*; and where there is perfect *ſubjection* there can be no *reſiſtance*, and where there is no reſiſtance there can be no *labour*. And then as for *Duration*, which is the other perfection of life, in the *Creature* it is attended with *dependence*. For there is no life but *depends* upon God, to be *ſhortened* or *prolonged* according to his pleaſure; the lives of all Beings are *maintained* and *ſupplied* by his *all-enlivening* power and influence, which if he *withdraw* from them but one moment, they preſently *expire*; ſo that the duration

duration of all *created* life is *dependent* and *precarious*, and even those Beings that ſhall live *for ever*, have no other *tenure* of life but Gods *Will* and *pleaſure*, who with the *breath* of his Noſtrils can *blow* them *out* when he pleaſes. But the *duration* of *Gods* life is altogether *independent*; for he ſubſiſts *of himſelf*, from that infinite *fulneſs* of Being that is in him, and *hath* done ſo from all Eternity *paſt* when there was no other cauſe but himſelf in being, and therefore *can* do ſo to all Eternity *to come* without the *ſupport* or *aſſiſtance* of any other cauſe. So that he is not at all beholding for his duration to the *good will* and *pleaſure* of any *other* Being, but derives from an inexhauſtible *ſpring* of life within *himſelf*, whence he alſo derives life to all other Beings.

AGAIN, when we attribute to him the perfection of *ſenſe*, viz. *quickneſs* and *exquiſiteneſs* of perception, we muſt wholly abſtract from it all that imperfection with which it is attended in the Creatures; for in them it is attended with ſundry *affections* which argue *imperfection* in their *nature* and *happineſs*; ſuch as *Fear*, *Sorrow*, *Repentance*, *Deſperation*, and the like; all which argue a defect of *Power* or *Wiſdom*, and proceed from a quick ſenſe of evil

paſt, or *preſent*, or *to come*, which is inconſiſtent with perfect happineſs. When therefore we attribute to God this perfection of *ſenſe*, we muſt abſtract from it all thoſe affections which proceed from the ſenſe of *evil* or *pain*. For he is ſo infinitely perfect both in *nature* and *happineſs*, that no evil can approach him to *vex* or *diſturb* him, or make any *painful* impreſſions on his nature; and being ſo, it is impoſſible that in propriety of ſpeech he ſhould either *fear*, or *grieve*, or *repent*, or *deſpair*. All theſe affections indeed are in Scripture attributed to him, but then it is in an *improper* and *Metaphorical* ſenſe; not as if he did at any time *feel* theſe paſſions within *himſelf*, but becauſe he *demeans* himſelf towards *us* as if he *did*; not as if the affections *themſelves* had any place in his *nature*, but becauſe the natural *effects* of them appear in his *actions* and *behaviour*. And though there is no doubt but he *reſents* all thoſe evils which good men *ſuffer*, and bad men *commit*, yet it is not from any *painful* impreſſion that they make upon his nature; for he neither *feels* the *miſeries* he *pities* and *relieves*, nor is *vext* at the *ſins* he *deteſts* and *abhors*, but all the reſentment he hath both of the evil of our *ſufferings* and *ſins* is perfectly

perfectly *calm* to himself, and devoid of all *passion* and *disturbance*. 'Tis true, his *Will* being *perfectly reasonable* must be *differently* affected towards *different* Objects, and *contrarily* affected towards *contrary* Objects, because they propose to it different and contrary *Reasons*; and therefore as it must be affected with *complacency* towards *good* Objects, so it must be affected with *abhorrence* towards *bad*; but this abhorrence arises not either from any *sense* of hurt they *do* him, or *fear* of hurt they *can* do him, his Nature being wholly *impassible*, but from the *repugnancy* they bear to his own *infallible* reason; and his abhorrence being wholly founded in his *Reason*, and not in any *sense* or *feeling* he hath of the evils he detests, must upon this account be stript of all *grief* and *vexation*. Wherefore in attributing to God the perfection of *sense*, we must take care to abstract from it all those *affections* which spring out of the *imperfection* either of our *nature*, or our *happiness*.

But then in the last place, when we attribute to him the perfections of *Reason*, viz. *Knowledge* and *Rectitude* of *Will*, we must also abstract from them all those imperfections with which they are attended in the Creatures; As for instance,

Knowledge in the Creature is attended with *reaſoning* and *diſcourſing*, that is, *inferring* one thing from another, arguing *Conſequents* from *Principles*, and *Effects* from *Cauſes*, which is a great *imperfection* of Knowledge, and a plain indication that it is *narrow* and *confined* in it ſelf, and not to be improved without *labour* and *ſtudy*. For that we are fain to infer one thing out of another is an evident token that we know but *in part*, becauſe in this way our knowledge muſt be *ſucceſſive*, and we muſt know one thing *before* we can know another; we muſt know the *Principles* before we can know the *Conſequents*, and the *Cauſes* before the *Effects*; elſe how can we *deduce* the one from the other? And this *deducing* or *inferring* requires a great deal of *ſtudy* and *labour*. Wherefore in attributing *Knowledg* to God we muſt abſtract from it this imperfection of *reaſoning* and *diſcourſe*; for his Knowledg being *infinite* or *unconfined* by the utmoſt *extention* and *duration* of things, doth at one *Intuition* or *ſimple view* behold all things *paſt*, and *preſent*, and *to come*, yea, *whenſoever*, *whereſoever*, or *howſoever* poſſible; and beholding as he doth all *Conſequents* in their *Principles*, all *Effects* in their *Cauſes*, he doth not

not know one thing *after* another, but comprehends them *all together* in his infinite mind, without any *ſucceſſion* or *improvement*. So that from all Eternity *paſt* he knew as much as he doth *now*, and as much as he *will* do to all Eternity *to come*; for his Knowledg was always *infinite*, and what is infinite admits not either of *more* or *leſs*. And then for that other perfection of reaſon which conſiſts in *Rectitude* of *Will*, in the Creature it is *acquired*, even as that Knowledg and Wiſdom is by which it is *meaſured* and *regulated*. For Rectitude of *Will* conſiſting in *chuſing* and *refuſing* as right Reaſon *directs*, muſt needs be *acquired* in the Creature, becauſe that *Right Reaſon* is ſo, by which it chuſes and refuſes; ſo that there is the ſame defect and imperfection in the Rectitude of *our* Wills as there is in *our* Reaſon and Knowledg, that is, that it is not *altogether*, but acquired by *degrees*, and ſo it may be is infinitely *ſucceſſive* and *improvable*. Wherefore in attributing to *God* Rectitude of Will, which, as I ſhewed before, conſiſts in *Goodneſs*, and *Juſtice*, and *Truth*, we are wholly to abſtract from it this imperfection of being *acquired*. For it is *eſſential* to his Will to *follow* the Dictates of his Underſtanding and Reaſon, and *eſſential*

to his Understanding to *dictate* to his Will all the *parts* and *degrees* of Goodness, Justice, and Truth; so that the rectitude of his Will is *infinite* both as to the *extent* and *degrees* of it, there being no *good*, no *degree* of good that an infinite reason can *propose*, but what his Will doth most readily *imbrace*, and perfectly *comply* with; so that the Rectitude of his Will is such as could not be acquired part *after* part, degree *after* degree, because it is *essentially infinite*; and *from* everlasting he was as good, and as just, and as faithful as *now*, and *to* everlasting he cannot be better, or juster, or faithfuller than he *is*, because what is essentially infinite admits no *improvement* either of *parts* or *degrees*. And thus you see how in all these respects it is absolutely necessary to the framing a right Apprehension of *God*, that in ascribing to him the perfections of the *Creature*, we abstract all those *defects* and *imperfections* with which they are intermixt.

IV. IT is necessary that in *arguing* from the perfections of the *Creature* to the perfections of *God*, we distinguish between the *state* and *relations* of *God* and *Creature*. For there are many things which are perfections in the Creature considering *their* state which would be imperfections in God considering *his*; and so on the

the contrary. As for instance, to be *dependent* and *humble*, *resigned* and *submissive*; to be *grateful* and *devout* are perfections in the *Creature*, because there is a Being infinitely *above* them in all *degrees* of all *sorts* of perfection, in *Knowledg* and *Wisdom*, in *Power* and *Goodness*, in *Justice* and *Truth*; a Being to whom they owe *themselves*, and all the *good things* they possess, and upon whom they depend for all that they *are*, or *enjoy*, or *hope* for; and therefore it infinitely becomes them to *abase* themselves before him, to *trust* to, and *depend* on him, and *resign* themselves to him; to *supplicate* him for all they *want*, and *thank* him for all they *enjoy*; but for God to be *humble*, who is infinitely perfect *above* all, for God to *depend*, who is the *upholder* of all, for him to *submit* who is *Lord* over all, or to be *devout* and *grateful*, who is the supreme *Fountain* and *Proprietor* of all, would be to *sneak* and *condescend* far beneath the infinite dignity of his Nature. As on the contrary, to love *himself* above all, to set up *his* Will above all other Wills, and to *expect* and *require* that they should do *homage* to it; to exact *Adoration* and *Worship* from all, and to *appropriate* it to himself *from* all other Beings, are excellencies and

perfections *in God*, because he is infinitely *amiable* above all other Beings, and therefore ought in reason to *love* himself above all, infinitely *exalted* above all other Beings, and therefore ought in reason to expect that all other Beings should be *subject* to him; in a word, because *he*, and he *alone* is God, and hath all divine perfections appropriate to himself, and therefore ought in reason to expect that all *capable* Beings should *acknowledg* his Divinity by *suitable* actions, and *restrain* their acknowledgment of it wholly to *himself*; but for a *Creature*, that is infinitely *less* lovely than God, and infinitely *inferiour* to him, to *love* it self, and *set up* its own Will above him, and *invade* his Throne and Divinity, and *arrogate* to it self his Honour and Worship, is not only *unreasonable*, but *impious*. In this case therefore we must carefully distinguish between the *states* of *God* and *Creature*, and not attribute to *him* those perfections of the Creature which are proper to *it*, under the notion of *Creature*, because in so doing we shall infinitely *degrade* him; but whatsoever is in *it self* a perfection, *precisely* considered from all respects to the *state* and *relations* of a Creature, *that* we ought to ascribe to God in its utmost *extent* and *degree*.

AND

AND yet even here it will in many caſes be neceſſary for us to keep this diſtinction of *God* and *Creature* in our minds; for though whatſoever is *abſolutely* and in *it ſelf* a perfection in the Creature is alſo a perfection in God, yet conſidering the *ſtate* of *God*, that may be an exerciſe of abſolute perfection in *him* which would be imperfection in a *Creature*. As for inſtance, *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*, and *Juſtice* are abſolute perfections in a Creature, and therefore ought to be attributed to God, but it doth not thence follow that *that* is no exerciſe of theſe perfections in *God* which is not ſo in *Creatures*. It is an act of *Wiſdom* in a *Creature* to purſue his ends by the moſt *probable* means, but it doth not therefore follow that it is an act of *folly* in *God* to effect his ends by *contrary* means, becauſe he being not only *all wiſe*, but *all-powerful*, which no Creature is, can make the moſt *contrary* means as *ſubſervient* to his ends as the moſt *probable*, and therefore ſometimes to *diſplay* the greatneſs of his *Power*, and to *excite* our *attention* and *reverence* he chuſes to operate by *contrary* means, and when he doth ſo he chuſeth moſt *wiſely*. Again, it is an act of *Goodneſs* in *us* to *ſuccour* the unfortunate, and *reſcue* oppreſſed

oppreſſed innocence from *undeſerved* calamities; and not to do ſo, when we can with *eaſe*, and without any *prejudice* to our ſelves, is a high degree of *malice* and *ill nature*. But it doth not therefore follow that it is an act of *malice* in *God* to permit innocence to *ſuffer*, when with *eaſe*, and without the leaſt *damage* to himſelf he can relieve it, becauſe being infinitely *wiſe* and *powerful*, which no Creature is, he can infallibly bring *good* out of *evil*, and advance us to *happineſs* by *ſuffering*; and therefore ſometimes he permits the innocent to ſuffer *evil*, thereby to procure them ſome *great* and *laſting* good; and when he doth ſo it is an act of great *Goodneſs* in him. Once more, it is *Juſtice* in the *Creature* not to *kill* or *hurt* the *Innocent*, not to *deprive* them of any *good* they are *rightfully* poſſeſs'd of, and to act contrary is great *injuſtice*, becauſe we have no right to *another* mans *Life*, or *Limbs*, or *Goods*, unleſs he *forfeits* them to us by ſome *unjuſt* attempt to deprive us of *ours*; but it doth not therefore follow, that it would be *unjuſt* in *God* to do ſo, who being the ſupreme *Proprietor* of our *Lives*, and *Limbs*, and *Goods*, which no Creature is of any other Creatures, can juſtly *reſume* them when he pleaſes, be we never

ſo

so *innocent*, because they are *his own*; whatever he *gave* us he can *take away* from us, without any *injury*, because he rather *lent* it than *gave* it us, reserving the absolute *propriety* in himself; and *his* right being *supreme*, *absolute*, and *independent*, and *ours* but *subordinate* and *conditional*, whatsoever *we* can justly do *he* can justly do, and abundantly *more*; so that though we may argue this or that is *just* in the Creature, therefore it is *just* in God, yet we cannot argue *è contra*, this or that is just in *God*, therefore it is just in the *Creature*, because *his* right in *all* things is *infinitely* Paramount to *our* right in *any* thing; and therefore though he cannot without our own *fault* and *forfeiture* reduce us to a *worse* state than that of *not being* wherein he *found* us, because to do so would be equivalent to the *taking away* from us more than he *gave* us, and consequently more than he hath a *right* to, yet Gods right being infinitely more *absolute* and *extensive* than ours, he can *justly* take away from *us* infinitely more than we can *justly* take away from *one another*. And therefore to correct the iniquities of wicked *Nations* and *Parents*, God sometimes lays his hand upon good *Kings*, and

and innocent *Children*, and either deprives them of their *comforts*, and purſues them with conſtant *infelicities*, or puts an *untimely* period to their *lives*; and when he doth ſo, he hath an *abſolute* right to do it, which no *other* Being can *pretend* to. Wherefore in attributing to God the perfections of the Creature we are carefully to diſtinguiſh between the *ſtate* of *God* and *Creatures*, and neither to aſcribe to him any of thoſe perfections which belong to a Creature, *as* a Creature, nor to *bound* the *exerciſe* of thoſe abſolute perfections we aſcribe to him by the *Rules* and *Limitations* of the Creature.

V. ALTHOUGH in *arguing* from the perfections of the *Creature* to the perfections of *God* we are not to ſubject him to the *Rules* of a *Creature*, yet we ought always to ſuppoſe his *Will* and *Power* to be intirely ſubject to the *Moral* perfections of his *own* nature. For God who is infinitely exalted *above* all other Beings can be ſubject to no *other* Law but that of his own Eſſential *Wiſdom*, and *Juſtice*, and *Goodneſs*; and ſince every thing hath a right to exerciſe its own faculties ſo far forth as it is *juſt* and *lawful*, God who is ſubject to no other Law but only that of his own perfections hath an *eſſential* right

to

to *will* and *do* whatever *that* Law *allows* and *approves* of. Now the *perfections* of God which give *Law* to his *Will* and *Power*, are thoſe which, for diſtinction ſake, we call *Moral*, becauſe their Office is the ſame in *him* with that of *moral Vertues* in the *Creature*, viz. to *conduct* and *regulate* his Will and Powers of action; and theſe *Moral* perfections are his *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*, *Juſtice*, and *Truth*, which being all *eſſential* to him are as much a Law to *his* Will and Power, as *Moral Laws* are to *ours*; And to ſuppoſe his *Will* and *Power* not to be perfectly *ſubject* to them, is to ſuppoſe him a very *defective* and *imperfect* Being, a *lawleſs* Will and Power being the greateſt *defect* in Nature. Wherefore to ſecure our minds againſt all *injurious* apprehenſions of God, *this* is a moſt neceſſary *Rule*, that we conceive him to be ſuch a Being as can neither *Will* nor *Act* any thing but what his own Eſſential *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*, and *Juſtice* do *approve*; that in all his *Decrees*, *Purpoſes*, *Choices*, and *Actions* conſults his *Moral* perfections, and perfectly *regulates* himſelf by them, and doth neither *chuſe* nor *refuſe*, *elect* nor *reprobate*, *ſave* nor *damn* without their full *conſent* and *approbation*. For to affirm that he is not

obliged

obliged to regulate himself by *Wisdom*, and *Justice* and *Goodness*, or that he *can* do otherwise, is to attribute to him a Power to Will and Act *foolishly*, *maliciously*, and *unjustly*, which indeed is not so properly *Power* as *Impotence*; and to suppose that he can *thus* Will and Act, is to deny that he is *infinitely* Wise, and Just, and Good, which utterly excludes all *possibility* of being *otherwise* in any *respect* or *degree*. For to be *infinitely* Wise and Just is to be *infinitely* removed from folly and injustice, which nothing *can* be that hath the least *degree* of *possibility* to act *unwisely* or *unjustly*. Wherefore in conceiving of God it is always to be supposed that his *Will* and *Power* are so *immutably* subject to the *Moral* perfections of his Nature, as that it is *impossible* for him to Will or Act *against* them. For all that *liberty* of Will that is determinable to *good* or *evil*, *just* or *unjust*, is a *flaw* and *imperfection* in the reasonable nature, because it speaks the Will to be *defective* in that which is the *utmost* possibility of *Goodness* and *Justice*, *i. e.* in being *immutably* determined thereunto; and therefore to attribute *such* a liberty to God, is to *scandalize* his Nature, and *reproach* it with imperfection. For all that *Power* which is not conducted by *Justice* and *Goodness* is only

power

power to *do* mischief, to *Tyrannize* over other Beings, and to *sport* and *play* with their miseries; which is so far from being a *perfection* of Power that it proceeds from the most wretched *weakness* and *impotence*. So that by attributing *such* a power to God, we foully *asperse* and *blaspheme* him, and instead of a God imagine a *worse* Devil, and *more* qualified to do mischief than any that are now in Hell, who though they are powerful *enough* to do mischief, are none of them *Omnipotently* mischievous; it is to imagine a *God* without a *Deity*, that is, without that *Essential* Rectitude of Will wherein all his *Moral* perfections do consist, which are the *Crown* and *Glory* of his Nature. For to be *good* and *just* are the *brightest* Rays of the Deity, the Rays that *illustrate* and *glorifie* all his other perfections, and without which infinite *Knowledg* and infinite *Power* would be nothing but infinite *Craft* and *Mischief*; so that to imagine that he hath any *Will* or *Power* that is not *Essentially* subject to his *Moral* perfections, is to *defate* the very *beauty* of his Nature, and represent him the most *horrid* thing in the World. Wherefore in conceiving of God we ought to fix *this* as the *main* and *fundamental* Rule of our thoughts, that he hath no *Will* to *Chuse*,

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or *Power* to *Act* but what are in *perfect* ſubjection to infinite *Wiſdom*, and *Juſtice*, and *Goodneſs*; and this will ſecure our minds from all thoſe *rigid* and *ſour* apprehenſions of him which by *reflecting* on his *Moral* perfections do him the greateſt *diſhonour*, and repreſent him the moſt *diſadvantageouſly* to mankind.

VI. AND laſtly, It is alſo neceſſary that in conceiving of the perfections of God we always ſuppoſe them exactly *harmonious* and *conſiſtent* with each other. For all perfections of Being, ſo far forth as they are perfections, are *conſiſtent* with each other, and like *ſtrait* lines drawn from the ſame Center run *Parallel* together without any *croſſing* or *interfering*. For there is nothing *contrary* to perfection but *imperfection*, and there is no *diſagreement* but what ariſes from *contrariety*. When therefore we conceive of the perfections of God, we muſt ſo conceive of them, as that there may be no manner of *inconſiſtency* or *diſagreement* between them, otherwiſe we muſt admit into our conceptions of them ſomething or other that is *defective* or *imperfect*. As for inſtance, in God there is infinite *Wiſdom*, and infinite *Juſtice*, infinite *Goodneſs*, and infinite *Mercy*, wherefore if we would conceive aright

aright of theſe his glorious perfections we muſt take care not to admit any Notion of any *one* of them that renders it repugnant to any *other*, but ſo to conceive of them *altogether* as that they may mutually *accord* and *agree* with each other. For while we apprehend his Goodneſs to be ſuch as that it will not *accord* with his Wiſdom, we muſt either ſuppoſe his Wiſdom to be *Craft*, or his Goodneſs to be *Folly*; and whilſt we apprehend his Mercy to be ſuch as that it will not *agree* with his Juſtice, we muſt either ſuppoſe his Juſtice to be *Cruelty*, or his Mercy to be *blind Pity* and *Fondneſs*; and it is certain that that goodneſs cannot be a perfection which *exceeds* the *meaſures* of Wiſdom, nor that Mercy neither which *tranſgreſſes* the *bounds* of Juſtice, and ſo on the contrary. For if either Gods goodneſs *excludes* his wiſdom, or his wiſdom his goodneſs; if either his Mercy *ſwallow up* his Juſtice, or his Juſtice his Mercy, there is an apparent *repugnance* and *contrariety* between them, and where there is a contrariety there muſt be *imperfection* in *one* or *t'other*, or *both*.

WHEREFORE if we would apprehend them *altogether*, as they *truly* are in God, that is, under the notion of *perfecti-*

ons, we must so conceive of them as that in all respects they may be perfectly *consistent* and *harmonious*; as that his Wisdom may not *clash* with his Goodness, nor his Goodness with his Wisdom; as that his Mercy may not *justle* with his Justice, nor his Justice with his Mercy; that is, we must conceive him to be as *wise* as he can be with infinite goodness, as *good* as he can be with infinite wisdom, as *just* as he can be with infinite mercy, and as *merciful* as he can be with infinite justice, which is to be *wise*, and *good*, and *just*, and *merciful*, so far as it is a *perfection* to be so. For to be *wise* beyond what is good, is *Craft*, to be *good* beyond what is wise, is *Dotage*, to be *just* beyond what is merciful, is *Rigour*, to be *merciful* beyond what is just, is *Easiness*, that is, they are all *imperfection*, so far as they are *beyond* what is *perfect*. Wherefore we ought to be very careful not to represent these his *Moral* perfections as *running a tilt* at one another, but to conceive of them *all together* as one *intire* perfection, which though like the Center of a Circle it hath many Lines drawn from it round about, and so is looked upon sometimes as the term of *this* Line, and sometimes of *that*, yet is but one *common* and *undivided* term to them *all*;

all; or, to ſpeak more plainly, though it exerts it ſelf in *different* ways and actions, and operates *diverſly* according to the diverſities of its Objects, and accordingly admits of divers *Names*, ſuch as *Wiſdom*, *Goodneſs*, *Juſtice*, and *Mercy*, yet is in it ſelf but one *ſimple* and *indiviſible* principle of action, all whoſe operations how *diverſe* ſoever are ſuch as perfectly *accord* with each other, whoſe acts of Wiſdom are all infinitely *good*, whoſe acts of goodneſs are all infinitely *wiſe*, whoſe acts of juſtice are infinitely *merciful*, and whoſe acts of mercy are infinitely *juſt*; ſo that in *this*, as well as in their *extenſion* and *degrees* they are all moſt *perfect*, *viz.* that they always operate with mutual *conſent*, and in perfect *harmony*. And while we *thus* conceive of the divine perfections, our minds will be mightily ſecured againſt all thoſe *falſe* apprehenſions of God which lead to *ſuperſtition* and *preſumption*; for we ſhall ſo apprehend his *wiſdom* and *juſtice* as not to be ſuperſtitiouſly *afraid*, and ſo apprehend his *goodneſs* and *mercy* as not to be preſumptuouſly *ſecure*; and as on the one hand his Juſtice will protect his Mercy from being *abuſed* by our *wanton* ſecurity, ſo on the other hand his goodneſs will protect his wiſdom from being

misrepresented by our *anxious* suspition. For while we consider his mercy thus *tempered* with his justice, and his wisdom with his goodness, we can neither expect *impunity* from the *one* if we *continue* wicked, nor yet suspect any *ill design* against us in the *other* if we *return* from our *evil ways*, and persevere in *well doing*.

SECT. III.

Of the causes *of our* mis-apprehensions *of God.*

I Now proceed to the *last* thing I proposed, which was to *assign* and *remove* the *causes* of mens *misapprehensions* of God; many of which are so *secret* and *obscure*, so *peculiar* to the *frame* and *temper* of mens brains, so *interwoven* with the infinite *varieties* of humane *Constitutions*, that it is very *difficult*, if not *impossible*, to *trace* them, so as to make an *exact* enumeration of them all; and therefore I shall only assign the most *common* and *visible* causes by which the generality of men are *misled* in their *Apprehensions* of

of the divine Nature, whinh are reducible to theſe ſix Heads:

Firſt, *Ignorance* of what is the *true* perfection of our *own* Nature.

Secondly, Framing our Notions of God according to the model of our own *humour* and *temper*.

Thirdly. Obſtinate *partiality* to our own ſinful *luſts* and *affections*.

Fourthly, Meaſuring Gods Nature by *particular Providences*.

Fifthly, Taking up our Notions of God from *obſcure* and *particular* paſſages, and not from the *plain* and *general* current of Scripture.

Sixthly, *Indevotion*.

I. ONE great cauſe of our miſapprehenſions of God is *Ignorance* of what is the *true* perfection of our *own* Natures. For, as I ſhewed before, in conceiving of the perfections of God we muſt take our *riſe* from thoſe perfections we behold in his *Creatures*, and particularly in our *own* Natures, wherein there is a compoſition of all *created* perfections; ſo that while we are ignorant of what is the true perfection of our *own* Natures, our thoughts can have no *rule* or *aim* whereby to judg of *God's*. That he hath all thoſe perfections in *himſelf* which he hath derived to

us, is the *Fundamental* Maxim upon which we are to erect our Notions of him; and therefore unleſs we know *what* thoſe perfections are which he hath derived to us, and *wherein* they conſiſt, our mind hath no *footing* or *foundation* whereon to raiſe any certain Idea of him. For ſince we have no other way to conceive of *his* perfections but by our *own*, how is it poſſible that while we are *ignorant* of our own we ſhould ever conceive *aright* of his? This therefore is one great reaſon why men do ſo *groſly* miſconceive of God, becauſe they have no true Notion of their *own* perfection, by which they are to form their conceptions of *his*.

FOR whereas the *true* perfection of humane nature conſiſts in *Moral goodneſs*, or an *univerſal* compliance of its *Will*, *Affections*, and *Actions* with thoſe everlaſting *Laws* of *righteouſneſs* which *right reaſon* preſcribes, how many are there that look upon this as a very *mean* and *carnal* accompliſhment, and place all their perfection in things of a quite *different* nature, *viz.* in the *Ebbs* and *Flows* of their *ſenſitive* paſſion, and the extraordinary *Fermentations* of their *blood* and *ſpirits*, that is to ſay, in unaccountable *dejections* and *exaltations* of mind, in vehement *impreſſi-*

impreſſions of *fancy* and Mechanical *movements* of *affection*, in *Raptures* and *Ecſtacies* and Hypocondriacal *incomes* and *manifeſtations*, that have nothing of *ſubſtantial* Vertue or Piety in them, nor commonly any other effect but to cauſe men to *renounce* that Righteouſneſs which they never *had*, and *rely* upon that which they have no *Title* to, and to *ſooth* and *tickle* their fancies, and *blow* them *up* into *glorious* opinions of themſelves, and *Triumphant* aſſurances of their being the *Darlings* and *Favourites* of God, whilſt poor *Moral* men, that make conſcience of *regulating* their *affections* and *actions* by the eternal *Laws* of *Righteouſneſs* are look'd upon by them with a *ſcornful* compaſſion, and placed in the *lowermoſt* form of ſinners, at the *greateſt* diſtance from the Kingdom of God. Now when men take ſuch *falſe* meaſures of their own perfecton, how is it poſſible they ſhould conceive *aright* of the perfections of God, which they have no other way to conceive of but only by *arguing* from their *own*? Wherefore in order to the forming our Ideas of *Gods* perfections, it is neceſſary we ſhould firſt fix the *true* Notion of our *own*; which is no hard matter for us to do. For our Nature being *reaſonable*, to be ſure its

perfection muſt conſiſt in willing, affecting and acting *reaſonably*, or which is the ſame thing, in *Governing* it ſelf in all its *relations* and *circumſtances* by thoſe immutable *Laws* of *goodneſs* which *right reaſon* preſcribes, and which are *exemplified* to us in the holy Scripture; and when we have fixt in our minds *this* Notion of our *own* perfection, it will naturally conduct our thoughts to *God*'s, and let us ſee that his perfection conſiſts not in a *lawleſs* and *boundleſs* Will, that *decrees* without *foreſight*, *reſolves* without *reaſon*, and *Wills* becauſe it *will*, and then *executes* its own *blind* and *unaccountable* purpoſes by dint of *irreſiſtible* power without any regard to *right* or *wrong*. For if we rightly underſtand our *own* perfection, we cannot but diſcern that ſuch a Will as *this* is one of the moſt *monſtrous* deformities in nature, becauſe it is the moſt Diametrically *oppoſite* to the *true* Idea of our own Perfection, which while we *attentively* fix our eyes on, we cannot but *infer* from it that the true perfection of God conſiſts in the *unvariable* determination of his *Will* by the all-comprehending *reaſon* of his *Mind*, or in *chuſing* and *refuſing*, *decreeing* and *executing* upon ſuch reaſons as beſt becomes a *God* to *will* and *act* on, *i.e.* upon ſuch

ſuch as are infinitely *wiſe*, and *good*, and *juſt*, and *merciful*. For if to Will and Act upon ſuch reaſons as *theſe* be the perfection of *our* nature, we cannot but conclude that it is the perfection of *Gods* too; but if we are *ignorant* of our own perfection, we muſt neceſſarily think of God *at Rovers*, without any certain *aim* or *rule* to *ſquare* and *direct* our apprehenſions.

II. ANOTHER cauſe of our miſapprehenſion of God, is our framing our Notions of him according to the Model of our own particular *humour* and *temper*. For *ſelf-love* being the moſt *vehement* affection of Humane Nature, and that upon which all its *other* affections are founded, there is no one Vice to which we are more univerſally obnoxious than that of exceſſive *fondneſs* and *partiality* to our ſelves, which makes us too often *dote* upon the *deformities*, and even *Idolize* the *Vices* of our own temper. So that whether our nature be *ſtern*, *ſour*, and *imperious*, or *fond*, *eaſie* and *indulgent*, we are apt to *admire* it as a *great* perfection merely becauſe it is *Ours*, without *meaſuring* it by thoſe eternal *reaſons* which are the *Rules* of *Good* and *Evil*, *Perfection* and *Imperfection*; and then whatever we look upon

upon as a perfection in *our ſelves* we naturally attribute to *God*, who is the *cauſe* and *fountain* of all perfection. And hence it comes to paſs that mens minds have been always tinctured with ſuch *falſe* and *repugnant* opinions of God, becauſe they frame their judgments of him not ſo much by their *reaſon* as by their *temper* and *humour*; and ſo their *different* humours being not only *unreaſonable* in themſelves, but *repugnant* and *contrary* to one another, produce in them not only *falſe* and *unreaſonable*, but *contrary* and *repugnant* opinions of God. Thus for inſtance, the *Epicureans* who were a *ſoft* and *voluptuous* Sect, intirely addicted to *eaſe* and *pleaſure*, fancied God to be *ſuch a one as themſelves*, a Being that was wholly *ſequeſtred* from action, and *confined* to an Extramundane Paradiſe, where he lived in perfect *eaſe*, and was entertained with infinite *Luxuries*, without ever concerning his *thoughts* with any thing *abroad*; for *this* they thought was the top of all perfection, and therefore *thus* they would have choſen to live had *they* been *Gods* themſelves. Thus the *Stoicks*, who were a ſort of very *moroſe* and *inflexible* people, copied their Notions of God from their own *complexion*, ſuppoſing him to be an *inflexible*

inflexible Being that was utterly incapable of being *moved* and *affected* by the *reaſons* of things, but was wholly governed by a *ſtern* and *inexorable* Fate. And accordingly the *Scythians* and *Thracians*, the *Gaules* and *Carthaginians*, who were a people of a *bloudy* and *Barbarous* nature, Pictured their Gods from their own *temper*, imagining them to be of a *bloud-thirſty* nature, that delighted to feed their hungry Noſtrils with the Nidorous *reeks* and *ſteams* of humane *gore*. Whereas, on the contrary, the *Platoniſts*, who were generally of a very *ſoft* and *amorous* nature, took their meaſure of God *thereby*, and ſo framed an Idea of him that was as *ſoft* and *amorous* as their own *complexion*, compoſed altogether of *loves*, and *ſmiles*, and *indearments*, without the leaſt intermixture of *vengeance* and *ſeverity*, how *juſt* ſoever in it ſelf, or *neceſſary* to the well-government of the World. Thus as the *Ethiopians* pictured their Gods *black* becauſe they were black themſelves, ſo generally men have been always prone to repreſent God in the colour of their *own* complexions; which is the cauſe that they many times repreſent him ſo utterly *unlike* to *himſelf*, becauſe out of an unreaſonable *partiality* to themſelves they firſt

miſtake

miſtake the *deformities* of their own natures for *perfections*, and then *Deifie* them them into *Divine Attributes*. *Thou thoughteſt*, ſaith God, *that I was altogether ſuch a one as thy ſelf*, Pſal. 50. 21. that is, thou didſt frame thy conceptions of me according to the Pattern of thy own *ill-nature*, and ſo thoughteſt *baſely* and *unworthily* of me. And hence I doubt not ſpring moſt of thoſe *miſapprehenſions* of God which have been received among *Chriſtians*. For how is it poſſible for any man that is not of a *fierce* and *cruel* nature *himſelf*, to believe it conſiſtent with the nature of *God* to ſnatch poor Infants from their Mothers Womb, that never *actually* offended him, and hurl them into the flames of Hell? And conſidering the *ſtern* and *inflexible* temper of the famous Author of the *Horrible Decree*, though otherwiſe a rare and admirable perſon, there is too much reaſon to ſuſpect that he tranſcribed his *own* nature into his *Doctrine*, and modelled his *Divinity* by his *Temper*. And ſo on the contrary, who but a man of exceſſive *fondneſs* and *partiality*, that *loves* beyond all *reaſon*, and invincibly *doats* upon the *deformities* of his *own* darlings, could ever imagine it conſiſtent with the *wiſdom* and *holineſs* of God to *chuſe* his

his favourites without *reaſon*, and, when he hath choſen them, not only to *overlook* all their *faults*, but to *hide* them from his own eyes with the *Mantle* of *anothers* Righteouſneſs, that ſo how *ill* ſoever they behave themſelves, he may never ſee cauſe to be diſpleaſed with them? From theſe and other inſtances it is evident that one great cauſe of our miſapprehenſions of God, is our meaſuring *his* nature by our *own*. For firſt, our *partiality* to our ſelves makes us *magnifie* our own *faults* into *perfections*, and then whatſoever we reckon a perfection in *our ſelves* we naturally attribute to *God*, and ſo many times it comes to paſs that our *Notions* of God are nothing but the *Images* of our ſelves, which *Narciſſus*-like we fall in love with for no other reaſon but becauſe they *reflect* our own *ſweet likeneſs*. As therefore we would not *wrong* God in our own thoughts, we muſt take care not to attribute to him any thing of our *own*, but what is a *perfection* in the judgment of the moſt *impartial reaſon*; and becauſe our *ſelf-love* is apt to *bribe* our own *reaſon* into a favourable opinion of whatever is our *own*, we ought to admit nothing of our own into our Notion of God but what is *voted* a perfection by the *common reaſon* of *Mankind*.

III. ANO-

III. ANOTHER cauſe of our miſapprehenſions of God is our obſtinate *partiality* to our own ſinful *luſts* and *affections.* For while men are *vehemently* addicted to any *ſinful* courſes, the true Notion of God muſt needs ſit very *uneaſily* on their minds, becauſe it will be always *quarrelling* with them, *ſuggeſting* arguments againſt them, and *alarming* them with *dreadful* thoughts and *dire* abodeings of a vengeance to come. For there is no *true* conception of Gods *nature* but what is pregnant with ſome *powerful* argument againſt *diſobedience* to his *Will*; ſo that while we obſtinately perſiſt in diſobedience to him, our *reaſon* cannot truly conceive of him without waging *War* againſt our *Luſts*, and while a man is thus at *variance* with himſelf, and *one* end of his Soul is at *War* with the *other*, ſo that he cannot *gratifie* his affection without *affronting* his reaſon, nor *comply* with his reaſon without doing *violence* to his affection, he can never be at eaſe *within*, till either he hath forced his affection to *ſubmit* to his reaſon, or his reaſon to *ſubmit* to his affection; but while a mans reaſon hath the *true* Notion of God and his perfections before it, 'twill be impoſſible for him to *reconcile* it to his ſinful *affections*, againſt

againſt which, whenever he *coolly* reflects, it muſt neceſſarily dictate *bitter* Invectives and denounce *horrible* Sentences. So that if he be *obſtinately* reſolved to ſide with his ſinful affections, he muſt either be content patiently to endure the *clamour* and *fury* of his own reaſon, which is one of the moſt *uneaſie* Penances in the World, or endeavour to *corrupt* and *ſophiſticate* his Notions of God with ſuch opinions as countenance his Luſts. And this, conſidering the mighty influence which mens *affections* have on their *reaſon*, is no hard matter to do; for the leaſt *ſhew* of *probability*, backt with a *ſtrong* affection for an opinion, is of greater force with *corrupt* minds than the cleareſt *demonſtration* againſt it. So that if the *Opinion* be but ſerviceable to the intereſt of a mans *luſt*, *that* will engage his *affection* on its ſide, and then the opinion having once retained thoſe *powerful* Orators in its cauſe, it is ſecure of a very *favourable* trial at the Tribunal of *reaſon*, where in all probability only *one* ſide of the Queſtion will be weighed, and Judgment will be given upon hearing the Arguments *for* it, without admitting any evidence *againſt* it.

THUS

THUS when men are *hunted* and *purſued* through their wicked courſes by the *true* Notions of God, it is expedient for them if they *reſolve* to go on to take ſanctuary in *falſe* ones, where their *Conſcience* and *Will*, their *reaſon* and *affections* may dwell *quietly* together, and they may be as wicked as they pleaſe without any *diſturbance*. And abundance of ſuch falſe Notions there are *prepared* to their hands, which mens wicked minds have *invented* in the defence of their luſts. For thus ſome, to *eaſe* their Conſciences, have perſuaded themſelves, that God is ſo wholly *taken up* with his *own* happineſs as that he is not *at leiſure* to concern himſelf about *humane actions*, and under this perſuaſion they ſin on with full *ſecurity* that he will never *puniſh* them. Others on the contrary, to *reconcile* their luſts, perſuade themſelves that God is wonderfully concerned about *ſmall* things; about *trifling* opinions and *indifferent* actions, and the *Rites*, and *Modes*, and *Appendages* of his Worſhip, and under this perſuaſion they hope to *attone* him for all the *immoralities* of their lives by the *forms* and *outſides* of Religion, by *uncommanded* ſeverities and *affected* ſingularities, by *contending* for Opinions,, and *ſtickling* for

for Parties, and being pragmatically *zealous* about the *borders* and *fringes* of Religion. Others there are that to *quiet* their *anxious* minds perſuade themſelves that God, *in Chriſt* at leaſt, is all *Mercy* and *Goodneſs*, without the leaſt allay of Righteous *Severity*, or vindictive *Juſtice*; and being thus perſuaded, they ſin on *ſecurely*, and under the Wing of his Mercy *affront* his Authority, without any *diſturbance*. Others again, that to *ſtifle* the ſenſe of their own *guilt* perſuade themſelves that God hath *irrevocably* determined the *everlaſting* Fate of men without any reſpect to their *doings*, and that thoſe whom he *will* ſave he will ſave *irreſiſtibly* without any concurrence of *theirs*, whereas thoſe whom he will *not* ſave he hath utterly *abandoned* to a dire *neceſſity* of *periſhing* for ever; from whence they conclude, that if they are of the number of thoſe that ſhall be *ſaved*, it is *needleſs* for them to endeavour *after* it; and if in the Liſt of thoſe that ſhall *periſh*, it is *in vain* for them to endeavour to *prevent* it; and that therefore their wiſeſt courſe is to *ſin on*, and expect the *Event*. All which are only the Artifices of wickedneſs to *reconcile* mens *Conſciences* to their *Luſts*, and *compromiſe* the *quarrel* between *God* and

their *wicked lives*, that ſo they may ſin on for the future without *check* or *remorſe*.

WHEREFORE if we would form a *right* Notion of God in our minds, and preſerve it *pure* and *unſophiſticated*, we muſt above all things beware not to let our *Luſts* intermingle with our *Reaſonings* about him, or to *bribe* us to *aſſent* to any *opinion* concerning him. For this is an eternal Maxim, that there is nothing can be *true* of the *moſt holy* God, that gives the leaſt *countenance* or *protection* to *ſin*; and therefore when ever it makes for the *intereſt* of our *Luſts* to *believe* any *opinion* of him, for *that* reaſon we ought to *reject* it; for nothing can be true of God that is not perfectly conſiſtent with his infinite *Holineſs*, and nothing can be conſiſtent with his infinite holineſs that is any way ſerviceable to the *intereſt* of *ſin*; ſo that while we ſuffer our ſinful intereſts to *dictate* to us our *opinions* of God, we make *falſhood* our *Oracle*, and the very *foundation* of our *Faith* is a *Lie*.

IV. ANOTHER great cauſe of our miſapprehenſins of God is our meaſuring his Nature by *particular Providences*. *The tree is known by its fruit* is the common Rule by

by which men judg of God as well as of *one another*, and it is moſt certain that every free Agent *is* as it *doth*, that the ordinary courſe of its *Actions* is an infallible *Index* of the inward *diſpoſitions* and *inclinations* of its mind; but as for the actions of *God*, they are not to be judged of *ſingly* and *apart* from one another, becauſe they have all *one* general *drift* and *tendency*, and ſo are mutually *dependent* upon one another, and cloſely *linked* together even from the *firſt* to the *ſecond*, and ſo on to the *laſt* in one continued *Chain* and *Series*; ſo that of all thoſe innumerable actions whereof his general Providence conſiſts there is no one *looſe* or *independent* Link, but every *one* is connected unto *all* the reſt, and all the *reſt* to *every* one throughout that mighty Chain. Wherefore unleſs we had an *intire* Proſpect of the whole *Series* of Gods actions, and of the mutual *reſpects* and *relations* which they bear to one another, it is impoſſible for us, without a *divine Revelation*, to make any *certain* judgment of *Particulars*. For though *this* or *that* particular action or providence of God, conſidered *ſeparately* from all the reſt, may have a very *pernicious* and *malevolent* Aſpect, yet it is to be conſidered that no action of God

is what it *would* be if it were *apart* by it ſelf, but what it *is* in *conjunction* with all the *reſt* of his actions, and that *that* which by *it ſelf* might prove very *pernicious*, may by being *contempered* with *others* of a *different* nature become exceeding *beneficial* to the World. For ſo in the Heavens there are ſundry Stars of a very *malignant* aſpect apart by *themſelves*, which yet in *conjunction* with other Stars of a *different* temper do many times derive a moſt *benign* influence upon us. And if men can give no certain judgment of any ſingle *Act* or *Scene* of Gods *Providence* without comprehending at once the whole *Drama*, how is it poſſible they ſhould take *true* meaſures of his *Nature* by any *particular* event that befalls them? For for all they know thoſe very Events which *ſingly* conſidered are moſt *noxious* to the World, may be moſt *beneficial* as they are *intermingled* and *contempered* with other Providences; ſo that while they meaſure God by *ſingle* Events they will many times deduce *ſour* and *rigid* opinions of him from thoſe very Providences which are the higheſt inſtances of his *benignity* and *goodneſs*. Thus, for inſtance, ſhould *Joſeph* have framed his judgment of Gods *Nature* by his being thrown into the

the *Pit*, ſold into *Ægypt*, and there caſt into *Priſon* for his *integrity* and *innocence*, what could he have thought of him but that he was a very *envious* and *malicious* Being, that took *delight* in *afflicting* innocence, and *ſported* himſelf with the *miſeries* of his Creatures? And yet conſidering what *followed* upon theſe ſad Providences, and how *theſe* were all of them but ſo many *ſteps* to his *advancement*, it is plain, that had he thought *thus*, he had thought very *injuriouſly*; thoſe *very* Providences from which he muſt have inferred Gods *malice* to him, being in *conjunction* with what followed moſt illuſtrious inſtances of his *Goodneſs* towards him.

AND yet how *commonly* do we ſee men paſs judgment on Gods *Nature* from ſuch *particular* Providences? They ſee a world of *deplorable* Accidents, ſuch as *Famines*, *Butcheries*, *Plagues*, and *Devaſtations*, in which *themſelves* are many times involved, from whence they are ready to conclude, that certainly God would never *inflict* or *ſuffer* theſe things if he were not of a very *froward*, *cruel*, and *implacable* nature; whereas did they but ſee theſe *ſad* accidents as they lie *interwoven* with all the *reſt* of his Providences, they would

doubtleſs ſee infinite reaſon to conclude the quite *contrary*. Sometimes again they behold Wickedneſs *proſper* in this World, and Vertue and Innocence *depreſſed* and *trampled on*, from whence they are ready to conclude, either that that which we *call* Vice and Vertue are things *indifferent* to God, or that he is *unjuſt* in the diſtribution of *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*; whereas had they an *intire* comprehenſion of the whole *train* and *ſeries* of his Providence, they would ſoon be convinced that even in theſe *croſs* diſtributions he doth moſt *equally* and moſt *effectually* puniſh the *Wicked*, and reward the *Good*, by rendring the *ones* Proſperity his *Bane*, and the *others* Adverſity his *Reſtorative*. Sometimes again they are *denied* thoſe *bleſſings* and *deliverances* which they have a long while *ſought* with moſt importunate *cries* and *ſupplications*, from whence they are ready to conclude that God is of a *ſtern* and *inexorable* nature, not to be *moved* or *prevailed with* by *prayers* and *intreaties*; whereas could they but ſee through the whole *drift* of his Providence, they would eaſily be ſatisfied that the goods they *pray for* are many times *pregnant* with *evils*, and the evils they *deprecate* with *goods* which are much *greater* than

than *themſelves*, and that *that* is the reaſon why God was *deaf* to their *intreaties*, becauſe he could not *grant* them what they *asked* without doing them ſome great *unkindneſs*, and that therefore theſe denials are ſo far from arguing him *ſtern* and *inexorable*, that, on the contrary, they are ſignal inſtances of his tender *mercy* and *compaſſion* towards us. If therefore we would conceive *aright* of God, we muſt not take our meaſures of his Nature by *particular Providences*, which many times *import* quite contrary to what they *ſeem* and *appear*, but having formed our Notions of his Nature out of thoſe *perfections* we behold in his *Creatures*, by *them* we are to meaſure all his *particular* Providences, which though they are ſometimes very *dark* and *obſcure*, and *ſeemingly* repugnant to our common Notions of him, yet becauſe we ſee not the *ends* and *reaſons* of them, we ought to conclude them *good*, becauſe they proceed from a *good God*.

V. ANOTHER main cauſe of our miſ-apprehenſions of God, is the taking up our Notions of him from *dark*, and *obſcure*, and *ſingle* paſſages, and not from the *plain* and *general* current of Scripture. There is no doubt but that whatſoever God hath

revealed of himſelf in Scripture, is *true*, becauſe *truth* and *veracity*, being a great *perfection* in *it ſelf*, muſt needs be included in *his* nature which is the Center of *all* perfection; but yet ſince there are ſome things in Scripture hard to be underſtood *in themſelves*, and other things difficult to *us*, who are not throughly acquainted with the *Cuſtoms* and *Controverſies* they refer *to*, or with the *Phraſe* and *Language* of the Age they were written *in*, it is impoſſible for us many times to comprehend its meaning by the mere *clink* and *ſound* of its words, without expounding its *obſcure* paſſages by its *plain* ones, and its *particular* propoſitions by its *general* current; and to found any *Doctrine* or *Opinion* upon *obſcure* and *particular* Phraſes, that *ſeemingly* contradicts the *plain* and *general* drift, and then to expound the *plain* into the *ſeeming* ſenſe of the *obſcure*, and the *general* current into the *ſeeming* ſenſe of the *particular* Phraſe, is a moſt egregious *prevarication* on the holy Scripture. And yet this *unreaſonable* practice hath occaſioned many *falſe* apprehenſions of God in mens minds. For there is nothing more evident than that all along through the *general* current of Scripture God is repreſented to us as a moſt *benevolent*

volent Being, that knows no *bounds* of *good-will*, but *ſtretches* out his *arms* unto *all* his Creation, and *receives* his whole Off-ſpring, excepting only thoſe *Prodigals* that run away from him, with *free* and *impartial* imbraces; as one that *would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*, and *readily* contributes to them all thoſe *aids* and *aſſiſtances* that are neceſſary to the effecting of theſe *bleſſed* ends; that *reprobates* none from his *kindneſs* and *favour* but only ſuch as *deſpiſe* and *reject* it, and never *abandons* any to *wretchedneſs* and *miſery* till they have firſt *baffled* and *defeated* all his *arts* of *ſaving* them. Such is the repreſentation of God which the *plain* and *general* ſcope of Scripture gives us; ſo that had men kept themſelves to *this* rule of expounding *obſcure* Texts by *plain* ones, and *particular* Phraſes by the *general* ſcope, when they *ſeemingly* claſh one with another, they had done *right* to God, and *ſecured* their *own* minds againſt ſundry very *wrongful* apprehenſions of him. For that God hath *deſtined* the *greateſt* part of mankind to *endleſs* calamity, without any *reſpect* to their *doings*; that he hath *two* Wills, *viz.* a *ſecret* and a *revealed* one; that his *revealed* Will is that he would

have

have *all* men to be *ſaved*, and his *ſecret* one, that he would have the *greateſt* part of them *periſh*; that he hath impoſed a Law upon men which without his *irreſiſtible grace* they *cannot* obey, and notwithſtanding he hath decreed to *withhold* this grace from the *greateſt* part of them, is reſolved to perſecute *all* that *do* not obey it with *everlaſting* flames of *vengeance*; Theſe, I ſay, are all of them ſuch opinions as *reflect* very *diſhonourably* upon God, and have no other foundation but a *few*, *particular* Phraſes and *obſcure* paſſages in Scripture, not only *abundance* of *plain* Texts, but the *general* drift and ſcope of it being of a quite *contrary* ſenſe. So that had but this *neceſſary* Rule been obſerved, of interpreting *dark* paſſages by *plain*, and *particular* ones by the *general* ſcope, ſuch *diſhonourable* opinions of God could never have found *ſhelter* under *Scripture Authority*. For I would fain know whether thoſe Texts which declare God to be an *univerſal lover* of the Souls of men, be not far more *numerous* and *plain*, than thoſe which *ſeemingly* reſtrain his affection to a *ſmall ſelect* number, and *reprobate* all the *reſt* of mankind; and if it be ſo, as I think no modeſt man can deny, how can this Doctrine de deduced from Scripture without

without forcing the far *greater* number of Texts to ſubſcribe to the *ſmaller*, and the *plainer* to the *obſcurer*, which is *contrary* to the moſt neceſſary *Rules* of *Interpretation*, and which, if *purſued*, will open a wide door to the *groſſeſt* and moſt *fulſome* errours in Religion. Wherefore to ſecure our minds from *falſe* apprehenſions of God, it is neceſſary that in conſulting the Scripture concerning him, we ſhould follow the *plain* and *general* drift of it, and not entertain *any* opinion of him upon the credit of a *few*, or of *obſcure* Texts, which *more* or *plainer* ones ſeemingly contradict. For it is certain, that *that* opinion is either *falſe*, or of *little* moment, that hath but *one* or *two* Texts to countenance it, and *that* very *dubious*, which hath none but *obſcure* Texts to relie on; but when there are more and much plainer *againſt* it than *for* it, it muſt be *falſe*, or there is no *relying* upon Scripture, the ſenſe whereof, as to all *particular* opinions, muſt be ſuppoſed to be that which the *moſt* and *plaineſt* Texts do countenance. So that he who imbraces any opinion that hath *more* and *plainer* Texts *againſt* it than *for* it, imbraces it for its *own* ſake, and not for the *Scriptures*.

VI. AND

VI. AND laſtly, Another cauſe of our miſapprehenſions of God is the great *diſſimilitude* and *contrariety* of *our* natures to *his*. For when men have nothing of *God* in them, nothing of thoſe amiable *graces* which are the *glory* and *luſtre* of *his* nature, it is impoſſible they ſhould have any *experience* of him, any inward *taſte* or *reliſh* of his perfections; ſo that they can only know him by the *hearing of the Ear*, by *Books*, and dry *diſcourſe* and *reaſoning*, which compared with *experimental* knowledge is very *uncertain* and *defective*. For between the *notional* and the *experimental* knowledg of God, there is the ſame difference as between the knowledge of a *Geographer* and a *Traveller*; the *one* hath only a *faint* and *rude* figure of *foreign* Countries in his head, copied from the *Globe* or *Geographical* deſcriptions; whereas the *other* having *travelled* through them, and *beheld* their *Situations*, and *Cities*, and *Rivers*, and *converſed* with their *People*, and *taſted* their *Fruits*, retains a *clear* and *lively* Idea of them, of the *exactneſs* whereof he hath as *firm* a certainty as of the truth of his own *ſenſes*. Thus he who knows God only by *Books* and *Diſcourſe*, can have but a *faint* and *imperfect* Idea of him; he may *believe* him

him to be *infinite* in all *kinds* and *degrees* of perfection, in *Goodneſs*, and *Mercy*, and *Juſtice*, and *Truth*, and be able to *demonſtrate* it upon dry principles of *reaſon*; but having no *experience* of theſe perfections in *himſelf*, no *ſenſe* or *reliſh* of their *beauty* and *excellency*, his apprehenſions of them are but *ſlight* and *obſcure*, like a *deaf* mans notions of *ſounds*, or a *blind* mans of *colours*, which for want of the evidence of *ſenſe* cannot be ſo *clear*, and *certain*, and *diſtinct* as theirs are who *ſee* and *hear*. Whereas he who *partakes* of the perfections of God, and is in any degree *pure* as *he* is *pure*, and *holy* as he is *holy*, hath as it were *travelled* into his very *Nature*, and *ſeen* all his perfections by the *light* of an infallible *experience*; he knows what God is, not ſo much by *reaſoning* and *diſcourſe*, as by a *quick* and *lively* ſenſe of the divine perfections, which he hath *copied* and *tranſcribed* into his *own* temper, and which, like the beams of the Sun, *light up* his thoughts to that *Fountain* of light from whence they were *derived*. And he who hath Gods *Picture* in his own *breaſt*, and can ſee *his* perfections in the *Graces* and *Vertues* of his own *mind*, knows him by his *Senſe* as well as by his *Reaſon*; he *ſees* and *feels* God in the *Godlike* temper of his

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own Soul, the *Graces* whereof are ſo many *living* Images of God, and *ſenſible* Comments on his nature, which render the mans Notions of him not only as *clear* and *diſtinct*, but alſo as *certain* and *indubitable* as any demonſtration in *Geometry*. For there is no evidence will give us ſo *full* a certainty of things as that of our own *ſenſes*; it was by *ſenſible* evidence that our Saviour *demonſtrated* himſelf to be the *Meſſias*, and *confuted* the Infidelity of his Apoſtle St. *Thomas*; and it is certain that our *bodily* ſenſes are not more *infallible* than is the *purified* ſenſe of our minds. When therefore we are *transformed* into the *likeneſs* of God, and made *partakers* of *his* Nature, we ſhall have a *vital* ſenſe and feeling of his perfections *within* us, by which the *true* Notions of him will be more *confirmed* and *aſcertained* to us than by all the *reaſons* and *demonſtrations* in the World. For *now* we ſhall behold the *beauties* of *Gods* Nature in the *God-like* diſpoſitions of our *own*, and beholding his *Face* in the *Glaſs* of our natures, whenſoever we *reflect* on it, his perfections will be as *intimate* and *familiar* to us as the Graces of our *own* minds; which will not only *awaken* our thoughts into *frequent* meditations of him, but alſo *heighten* and

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improve our Meditations into the moſt *glorious* Ideas of him. For, when all is done, there is no man can *think* ſo *well* of God as he who hath a *Godlike* nature, becauſe the *reſemblance* he bears to him will not only frequently *raiſe up* his thoughts toGod,but alſo *ſhape* them into a *conformity* with his nature; whereas whilſt we are *unlike* to God,we are not only *devoid* of all that evidence of his perfections which the *purified ſenſe* of our nature would give us, and conſequently our Notions of him, for want of that evidence, will be only *ſuperficial* and *uncertain*, but through our *partiality* to our own *ungodlike* diſpoſitions we ſhall be apt to entertain ſuch Notions of him as are as unlike him as *our ſelves*. For either out of fondneſs to *our ſelves* we ſhall look upon our *ill diſpoſitions* as *perfections*, and ſo attribute them to *God*, or out of fondneſs to *thoſe* ill diſpoſitions we ſhall be tempted to admit ſuch opinions of God as will *licenſe* and *indulge* them.

WHEREFORE if we would ſecure our minds againſt all *falſe* apprehenſions of God, we muſt above all things endeavour to *purifie* our hearts from thoſe *evil* diſpoſitions which render us *unlike* him; from *ſenſuality* and *injuſtice*, from *pride* and

and *diſcontent*, from *envy*, *hatred*, and all *uncharitableneſs*, which are the great *corrupters* of our minds, the boſom *Hereticks* that *ſeduce* and *pervert* us, and, as much as in us lies, to *conform* our ſelves to the nature of *God*, by practiſing the *contrary* Vertues; and when once by *imitating* the perfections of *his* nature we have *tranſcribed* them into our *own*, we ſhall *ſee* and *feel* him in *our ſelves*, and our *Senſe* of him will *conduct* our *Reaſon*, our *Experience* of him wil *correct* our *Knowledg*, and our *Viſion* of him *conſummate* our *Faith*; and we ſhall be more *enlightened* in our *knowledg* of him by beholding *his* face in the *ſanctity* of our *own* minds, than by a *thouſand Volumes* of *curious* Speculations.

And now, having ſeen what the true *cauſes* of all our *miſapprehenſions* of God are, let us from henceforth *beware* of them, and, ſo far as in us lies, labour to *avoid* them; and conſidering of what *vaſt* advantage to our Religion *right* and *true* Notions of God are, let us *diligently* apply our ſelves to the *above-named Rules* for the *regulating* our apprehenſions concerning him; that ſo having throughly *purged* our thoughts of all *erroneous* opinions, we may ſee God *truly* as he *is*, arrayed in all the

the *genuine* perfections of his nature. And *then* we shall find our *lives* and *affections* under the Influence of the most *powerful* reasons in the World. For every thing of God is *full* of *persuasion*, all his perfections have a *constraining* Rhetorick in them that by a kind of *Moral* violence *conquers* all that attend to it, and *seises* and *captivates* their *Wills* in despight of all the *reluctances* of their *natures*. So that when once our minds are throughly instructed with the *true* Notions of God, we shall not need to seek *abroad* for *Motives* and *Arguments*, for we shall have a *Fountain* of divine Oratory within our own *Bosoms*, from whence our *Wills* and *Affections* will be continually *watered* with the most *fruitful* inducements to *Piety* and *Vertue*; insomuch that which way soever we turn our selves we shall see our selves *surrounded* with such *invincible* reasons to *trust* in God and to *fear* him, to *admire* and *love* him, to *obey* and *worship* him, as will *animate* our faculties, *wing* and *inspire* our *drooping* indeavours, and carry us on with unspeakable *Chearfulness* and *Alacrity* through all the *weary* stages of Religion; and we shall no longer look upon Religion as the *burthen* and *oppression* of our nature, but readily *embrace* it as our *Ornament*

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and *Crown*, our *Glory* and *Happiness*, as being fully convinced that in *serving* of *God* we serve not only the *greatest*, but the *best* Master in the World.

FINIS.